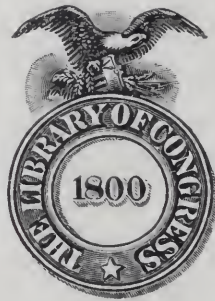


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The Story of Jonah

TO ALL
YOUNG PEOPLES' SOCIETIES AND TO ALL OTHER FRIENDS

Who love truth in simple garb,
Who wish to live right always,
And who admire
The marvellous Power,
The Peerless Patience and
The Matchless Mercy
Of a Wonder-working.

PROVIDENTIAL RULER AND GUIDE,

These chapters are most humbly, yet respectfully, dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

The Story of Jonah,

THE TRUANT PROPHET.

TOLD FOR ITS PRACTICAL LESSONS,

—BY—

Rev. J. S. Boyd

AUTHOR OF "THE SIGNIFICANCY OF NAMES," "EVERY FAMILY APART,"
"THE LOST SHIP AND OTHER POEMS," ETC.

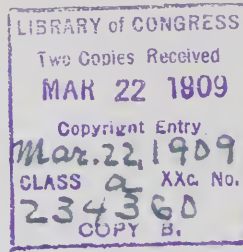
With a large part of one chapter by
REV. H. CLAY TRUMBULL, D. D., LL. D.

These lessons thou dost give
To teach me how to live,
 To do, to bear,
 To get and share,
 To work and play,
 And trust always.

✓

—Maltbie D. Babcock.

THE JOURNAL PRINTING CO.,
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FOREWORD

Are any troubled about the inspiration of the book of Jonah, and the authenticity of the narrative? It is hoped such may find some help from the present chapters, which have been penned in simple form for young friends and for busy people who must necessarily read hurriedly.

Most of the uncredited quotations that the reader may note, were borrowed either directly, or at second hand, from the work of Dr. Pusey, which abounds in material gathered from the Christian Fathers and many varied sources.

Sincere and grateful acknowledgment is made of the kindly courtesy of the late Rev. H. Clay Trumbull, D. D., LL. D. and his publishers, Messrs. J. D. Wattles & Co., for permission to use the long and valuable extract found in Chapter XIV, and which, it is believed, contains matter entirely, or quite new to most readers.

If what is here written shall in any measure prove helpful to any, in strengthening faith in God; faith in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, especially this part of them; and faith in our precious Saviour who was, in various points, so strikingly typified by Jonah; the writer will gratefully consider that ample reward has come to his humble, yet willing and glad labor.



COMMENDATORY.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., MAY 11, 1907.

MY DEAR BROTHER BOYD:—

I have completed the reading of your Manuscript, The Story of Jonah, and think the treatment excellent—well worth publishing. It will fill an important place in the “side light” literature which helps to a correct understanding of the word.

Hoping that you may be able to send this message out to the reading world at an early date and believing that it will be well received, I am

Very truly yours,

A. B. MARSHALL, Pastor First Presbyterian Church.

* * *

I have read The Story of Jonah with unusual interest. Through personal acquaintance with the author, Rev. J. S. Boyd, I am assured of his eminent fitness for the writing of such a book, by reason of his ripe scholarship and experience, and his former successful authorship.

He has opened some new pathways of thought on what we supposed to be beaten ground. His style is clear, yet racy, and his thought, strong. The book will be a welcome addition to any library, and will command the increasing interest of every reader.

W. A. PRINGLE,

Professor of Literature, Red River Valley University.

* * *

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:—

I have examined hastily the work of Rev. J. S. Boyd entitled “The Story of Jonah.”

I would be glad to see this work in the hands of both the ministry and laymen of our beloved Church.

The book of Jonah has been made the target of attack by the anti-supernaturalists everywhere, and I believe the present defense is strong against all such.

It is also, in an attractive way, expository, as the salient points are brought out under the different heads discussed.

Rev. J. S. Boyd is an ardent champion of the Word of God in its purity and his messages will be refreshing to the Church.

Knowing the author personally I shall feel deeply interested in the publication of the work.

I feel interested also because it is a timely work and well suited to the needs of this age.

Very sincerely,

F. E. SPRINGER,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Caldwell, Idaho.

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The Book

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.—Matthew 12:41.

No other book so threatened and assailed;
Surviving as no other all the stern
And varied exigence of time and change,
From out the crucial test it comes sublime,
Bearing its own credentials; impregnable,
It meets unmoved the fury of the storm,
And stands majestic in the might of truth.

—Jennie Blakeslee Richards, on the Bible.

I.

THE BOOK

Of no portion of the Scriptures have opinions been more varied than about the book of Jonah. No part of the Bible has been more opposed, no part more argued against.

Back in the early centuries of the Christian era the book was made the subject of banter and ridicule by the Pagans, who accused the followers of Christ of great credulity in believing the story of a man being saved from the deep by a fish.

In modern times, too, the same spirit has been shown by the enemies of revelation; while pretended friends, by their "sapping arts of anti-supernaturalism," have pursued methods that would not only put the book totally out of the canon of Scripture, but, if applied in the same way to other inspired writings, would blot from them much that is strictly historical in its import, and leave sincere seekers after God's truth to wander unguided in the fields of mere conjecture and fable.

Several early writers hold to the idea that all that is narrated in the book was transacted in a dream. Others, with great learning, but with extravagant license of imagination, have insisted that the book is an historical allegory. They try to persuade us that, although Jonah was a historical personage, yet he was, in this writing, symbolical partly of Manasseh, and partly of Josiah, kings of Judah; that the ship was the Jewish state; that the storm was the political convulsions which threatened its safety; that the master of the ship was Zadok, the High Priest; that the great fish was the city of Lybon on the Orontes, where Manasseh was detained as prisoner; and that other fancied similarities are a part of the true explanation of the book.

Other writers, mostly German mystics, have argued that the book is a parable, a moral fiction, or a myth.

Another class, while admitting an historical basis, hold that it has been clothed in its present dress in order that it might be more effectively used for teaching purposes.

And still others would derive it from popular tradition, tracing it to the fable of the deliverance of Andromeda from a sea monster by Perseus; or to that of Hercules, who, as Greek writers tell us, in order to save Hesione from a great sea-serpent, or fish, to which she was devoted by her father, Laomedon, leaped armed into the great

monster's mouth, and was three days in its belly before accomplishing its death.

Now, some of these writers have not a few points in common with each other. Their differences, however, are very many and most essential; while they all frankly acknowledge the great difficulties which beset the subject. Very evident, therefore, is it that no certain standing ground can be found in any one of all these various inharmonious and unsatisfactory proposed explanations.

What, then, are we to think of the narrative of this book? Surely not what infidelity teaches. Nor yet what the so-called higher critics hold. We feel certain we have most ample reason for firmly maintaining an opinion radically different from those above named.

Not for a moment can it be admitted that the book is only a dream narrative. For, first, there is not a single circumstance in the account that would suggest such an idea. And, second, a little examination will show that whenever any writer in the Holy Scriptures gives any account of a dream he always states the fact. Moreover, third, the very manner in which the book opens and closes absolutely precludes the idea of its being a dream, or vision. So this theory falls.

Nor can we at all accept the idea that the book is merely an historical allegory. And why not? For one thing, because a fair study of the writings of those who hold this view soon makes it clear that the only thing suggesting the thought of allegory to them is the miracles in the book at which they stumble. But it is proposed to show, in its proper place below, that these miracles are no more marvellous than many others narrated in both the Old and New Testaments, and that therefore they form no reason for assigning an allegorical character here any more than in many other places—the account of the raising of Lazarus, for instance.

Another thing, it is not found to be the custom of the sacred writers to make use of mere portents or prodigies in their parabolic teaching. They invariably use facts, not fables or imaginary wonders. Apocryphal writings often abound in legends and marvels; the canonical writings never. This is a marked distinction between them. The inspired books never surpass the limits of the possible, or of the perfectly reliable, even in their most figurative teaching. And studying the book of Jonah, the candid mind will surely soon perceive that the whole cast of the narrative is too exact, too detailed, too evidently a narration of facts, to be consistent with the idea of an allegory.

And still another reason for rejecting the allegorical view is this:

It cannot be explained why the writer of an allegory, or a fiction, would choose a known prophet of God as the subject of so great misbehaviour and severe disapproval. Such a writer would be free to choose his characters at will. And surely his purpose would be fully answered by using a fictitious name, or by omitting the name altogether. If writing an allegory he need not use a genuine name at all. Very strange, indeed, if he should do so. Very strange that he would ascribe to a real person things only imaginary and unreal. If Jonah did not act as this book narrates, is it not marvellous, yea, unbelievable, to suppose that a Jewish writer would positively say he did the things here written, and that afterwards the writer's fabrication should be adopted into the Jewish canon? We cannot for a moment conceive it.

Surely, then, the theory of an historical allegory, insisted on by some, has no claim upon us. It must be considered utterly untenable even from a rational point of view.

And still farther, negatively, consent cannot be given to the affirmation that the book is only a moralizing fiction, or a myth, clothed and fixed up for didactic purposes; for such a position seems to be directly contrary to our Lord's teaching in the New Testament.

And still yet less allowable, if any difference, is the claim that the narrative grew out of popular tradition. Much more likely that the fables of Perseus and Hercules were evolved from the inspired account in Jonah.

No, none of these several views at all satisfy the devout inquiry of the spiritually hungry and believing soul. A solid foundation for faith—one that is felt to be solid, and that always yields conscious upholding like the everlasting arms underneath—must be sought elsewhere.

This solid foundation we firmly believe we find in the opinion that gives to the book a STRICTLY HISTORICAL CHARACTER.

O here, my soul, find stable rest;
 Uncertainties no more infest
 The faith, nor sleuth-like doubts distract,
 If fable is exchanged for fact.

Here is ground on which to stand unshaken. The book is a narration of facts which actually took place in the life and experience of the prophet named. This is the position of Spirit-taught

faith—a position which we humbly and sincerely believe gives honor to the wonder-working God, and agrees with everlasting truth.

A while ago it was asked, what are we to think about the book. The answer is to be found in the position just now taken. Our unwavering thought is to be that the narrative of Jonah is a historical verity.

Are reasons for so thinking demanded? To every sincere inquirer they are rightfully due, and to such it is a pleasure to give them. Thoughtful attention is kindly invited to those that follow.

One reason persuading to the view advocated in this humble treatise is this: Ever since the days of Ezra the scribe, who collected the canonical writings of the Old Testament into one volume, the mass of Bible scholars have stoutly held to the opinion that the book of Jonah has a rightful place among the inspired writings.

This fact, of course, does not settle the question. But it has great weight, and helps to strengthen other arguments.

The fact that the great majority of conscientious christian scholars have counted Jonah true history argues strongly for this view. These learned men heartily wished to be right. Unwarped by prejudice they sought light. Many of them had just as much acumen and scholarship as any who secularize the book. It is wholly gratuitous to think that the Holy Spirit, whose guidance they sought, would leave them so fully, and for so many successive centuries of cumulative study, to error.

It seems most reasonable, then, to earnestly maintain that an enlightened belief in the divine authority of the books composing the canon of the Old Testament scriptures most powerfully persuades to the belief that the narrative in this book is strictly historical in its character.

Then another reason persuading to the same view is this: To the candid mind the book READS like history. As the exhaustive Pusey says: "Every phrase in it is vivid and graphic. There is not a word which does not advance the history. There is no reflection. All hastens on to the completion, and when God has given the key to the whole, the book closes with his words of exceeding tenderness lingering in our ears."

And surely, too, as the scholarly Henderson writes: "On perusing the very first sentence, every unprejudiced reader must conclude that there had existed such a prophet, and that what follows is simply a narrative of facts." The formula: "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah—saying—"the very same formula that is so

often and so commonly used in the other books of the scriptures in prefacing real prophetic communications—is here so appropriated, “that to put any other construction upon it would be a gross violation of one of the first principles of interpretation.” All this argues the book of Jonah to be real history.

But there is higher proof yet. LET US COME TO REVELATION. Its teaching is ever unerring. The authority of the Son of God is paramount. No discount is ever to be placed on his words. Implicit reliance on what he says is always the right thing. Then, with humility, yea, even with eagerness, let us inquire: What is the teaching of our Lord about Jonah?

In Matthew twelfth chapter, thirty ninth and fortieth verses, we find it. Some of the Scribes and Pharisees asked him for a sign, that is, for a miracle the word means. He replies: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Does our Lord here refer to an actual occurrence, or only to an imaginary one?

It is certainly true that in every other case in which he makes use of passages from the Old Testament to illustrate, or enforce his teaching, every point or circumstance in those passages has historic verity. He uniformly quotes and reasons upon them as true and universally admitted. He stamps them as such by his divine authority and passes them on for the confident belief of people in all the future.

And who dare say that this reference to Jonah is an exception? Does it not seem to be the most reasonable thing to affirm that our Lord here, as every where else when he made use of Old Testament incidents, employed that which had actually occurred? and also at the same time, by his own divine authority, stamped the incident as true?

So humble faith believes. The Divine Saviour endorses the narrative in Jonah as authentic. He sanctions the overwhelming christian belief that there was a real prophet Jonah, who really experienced what is told of him. He affirms positively “he was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly.” And from this he draws an exact parallel of what would ere long befall himself.

But the words the Saviour uses in the next sentence very plainly emphasize this view, and indubitably enforce it beyond all cavil.

He goes on to say in the forty-first verse: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

What a wonderful verse this is! It is full of thrilling meaning. Was it the intention that it should be understood? Surely, yes. But is it possible to understand it at all on the mere non-historic theory of the narrative about Jonah?

To know the intent and the teaching of this text, vivid thought must be had of the time and the occasion on which it was uttered, and also of the Teacher and those he was teaching. Jesus was that day speaking words of solemn warning. He was to be the future Judge of all men. At that Great Day he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations shall be gathered to judgment. He has the whole scene vividly before his own mind. He wishes to put it vividly before the minds of his hearers. How will he do this? Will he do it by referring to a mythical writing—a writing that he, being divine, knows to be only a myth? Surely, he will not make his best impression that way. And surely, too, he will not so trifle with his hearers as to try to impose on them as TRUE that which he himself knew to be only UNREAL and IMAGINARY. No, we cannot conceive of our Lord, at such a time, and for the high purpose he then had in mind, using that which was only a myth.

Nor can it reasonably be supposed that he drew his illustration from what he positively knew to be only allegory. If he did, then, in that case, the men of Nineveh are only imaginary people, Jonas is an imaginary personage, his preaching is imaginary, and their repentance imaginary.

And what would this mean? It would mean that the Lord of heaven, the God-Man, Christ Jesus, who was the Truth, who was divine and knew the past as well as the present and the future—it would mean that such an One as he solemnly declared that "the fictitious, unreal and non-existent characters of a parable shall actually be arraigned at the same bar with the living men of that generation."

Surely the prayerfully thoughtful will draw back from a teaching like this. We cannot believe that the Lord Jesus, in any sense or measure, countenanced the idea that the book of Jonah was either myth, parable or allegory. The reasonable thought about it seems clearly to be that it is actual history.

Observe closely; our Lord, at the time, was using words to make

some of the doings of the judgment day intensely real. So he positively informs his audience, not of mythical, but of real persons, who will be there. As if he had said: "There were veritable men of Nineveh. There was a real prophet Jonas who preached to the people of that great city. His hearers actually repented. Moreover, they will all most certainly appear at the future judgment. All the present generation will just as certainly appear there at the same time. Yea, the real men of Nineveh will assuredly rise in the judgment at the same time with you. And it will then be made indubitable clear that the men of Nineveh genuinely repented at the preaching of a preacher undeniably inferior, to the One who now declares the truth to you, who yet remain impenitent.

The contrast at that day will be marked and impressive. This generation had a greater preacher than the Ninevites; it had indisputably more frequent and more divine preaching, yet it profited not. So the very course and conduct of the people of Nineveh, with their meager privileges and advantages, will actually be a condemnation of the course and conduct of the people of this generation, who have had, and now have, vastly superior privileges and advantages. The people of Nineveh repented after one day's preaching of just one truth by an unwilling prophet. The men of this generation did not repent after the repeated preaching of richly varied truths by Him who came willingly from heaven to do the will of heaven; who spake as man never spake; and whose living word is the very law of earth, and of heaven too."

Having, then, all these considerations before our minds, it seems indisputably clear that the book of Jonah can only be regarded as a narrative of incidents that really occurred. We believe our Blessed Lord so endorsed it, and, therefore, we are so to understand it.

As we, then, after first invoking the Holy Spirit's gracious aid, proceed to consider the chief points in the varied career of this strangely behaving Old Testament character, let us do so assured, from what we have seen in the discussion thus far, that he, as the writer of this book, was indeed a prophet inspired, and that the book called by his name is veritable history.

So we may expect to be profited. So, we believe, God will be honored. Amen.

The Man

According to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.—II Kings 14:25.

For my own part, if my pocket was full of stones, I have no right to throw one at the greatest backslider on earth. I have either done as bad or worse than he, or I certainly should if the Lord had left me a little to myself; for I am made of just the same materials; if there be any difference, it is wholly of grace.—John Newton.

II.

THE MAN.

His character claims a first word. Then some outgoings of his character as they appear in the incidents of the narrative bespeak attention.

Like many another frail mortal Jonah was self-willed. The story shows him playing the child. He sulked, was petulant, wanted to have his own way, was determined to have it, especially when the Lord called him to a duty he disliked. Children are often wayward without reason. Jonah, shirking, was not unlike them. He could only be called strong in the sense of being headstrong. He tried to take things in his own hands; thought he could only be happy in so doing; but found, as all other like behaving people do, that this only brought him into trouble and made him unhappy. He soon discovered that kicking out of the traces is no mere diversion, and that, although playing at it may momentarily gratify an ugly temper and show dissatisfaction with plain duty, yet still greater dissatisfaction will surely soon follow.

His conduct, both before and after his mission to Nineveh, looks marvellously strange in the light of the high position he occupied. A paradox inexplicable we are forced to call him. "A prophet of God, and yet a run-a-way from God. A man drowned, and yet alive. A preacher of repentance, and yet repining at repentance." Believing God would have mercy upon Nineveh, yet sitting in his booth on the hill overlooking the city awaiting its destruction. His conduct is a contradiction, an unravelable enigma, only as we know the innate perverseness of the natural heart. Lacking consecration it is lawlessly contrary. Void of the Holy Spirit, it avoids Spirit-bidden duty. Having no light of love in it prompting glad obedience, it seems to take delight in disobedience.

Of such sad perversity Jonah was a striking example. Once loyally exercising prophetic influence; again trying to flee it. Once called of the Lord, and responding; again as fully called, we see him unresponsive and rebellious. Contrariety has stolen into his heart and made him as opposite to his former self as icy indifference is to the warmth of loyal affection. His mistake was he did not abide in his Lord. He did not cultivate piety. He did not seek divine strength for unpleasant duty. He did not turn to the Lord, but FROM him.

Just when he much needed God's special presence, he tried to flee that presence. Do we pity him? Beware lest we copy him and dishonor our Lord in a like way.

But may not candor find some things calculated to soften our thought of the man? He did wrong, but who now-a-days has a right to be his judge? Let him that is without similar sin cast the first stone at him.

Think of the many advantages we have today that he did not have. Christ had not then come. As the Great Teacher from heaven he had not then delivered his Sermon on the Mount, nor given his other full and blessedly helpful instructions. The canon of Scripture was then far from being completed. Jonah had only a few of the books of the Old Testament; none at all of the New. He had the Law and the Psalms, the book of Ruth and parts of the Historical books, but he did not have the seventeen books of the Prophets, nor the four Gospels, nor the Acts of the Apostles, nor the twenty-one Epistles, nor the book of Revelation, the blessed climax of the whole. We have all these, and are responsible far above him and the people of his day. "To whom much is given, of him will much be required."

Moreover, when Jonah lived the distinction between sin and the sinner had not been so clearly defined as it has been since. He had grown up with the idea that to hate sin was to hate the sinner. So most of the education of that day taught. David, in his devotion, had declared to the Lord: "I hate them that hate thee; yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred." And few of the people of his time and later had learned that detesting sin thus was perfectly consistent with having pity on the persons who sinned, being kind to them, praying for them, and working for their good. The voice from heaven had not then rung out in its plea: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink." The Lord's people, when Jonah lived, were not out of the childhood of the age. The most of them had not yet got so far on as to do good for evil. They felt that the enemies of God and his people deserved neither mercy, pity or sympathy, but were only meet subjects for discipline, punishment or death.

It is true that David, the inspired author of the Psalms, lifted up to a high plane, where justice and mercy kiss each other, had cried out in his lament over the waywardness of sinners: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy Law." meaning

God's holy precepts. But then David, full of the Holy Spirit, was away ahead of his age. Very few had then attained to his spiritual stature. The times taught hatred to enemies, and human nature in most hearts prompted the same.

Living in such an atmosphere of thought and practise as that, Jonah was not a little imbued with the same sentiment and promptings. Therefore, he had a strong feeling against doing any thing to help the Ninevites, the known enemies of the Lord's people. Hence his naughty conduct.

The lesson for us is: avoid a Jonah-character. We have advantages vastly superior to those enjoyed in the days of the Minor Prophets. These advantages have been given to us for use in the service of him who gave them. Surely we are responsible above Old Testament people in a very high degree.

But we must not fail to note that, in all his sorry behaviour, Jonah was still a servant of the Lord. He had pitiaibly lost ground; was a backslider of a most reprehensible type; yet there were still the embers of grace within him, that, as soon as he came to himself, began to glow and warm anew toward his Heavenly Friend as before. During all the days of his wretched disobedience the love of God was still in his heart, though, for the time being, covered over, smothered and repressed by the results of his waywardness and rebellion. He had not lost salvation, but the blessed joys of it, and the manifestation of it because of his sin, just as David once did because of his. So, when the storm on the sea aroused him to his senses, he at once saw his guilt, became subdued and penitent, and, still hoping in the mercy of God, called earnestly upon him in penitence and real worship. His true and beter self then beautifully appeared. No one could pray as he did, as shown in the second chapter of his book, unless he had been long taught of God, and had the love of God in his heart as a working force.

The whole account warns us to beware of backsliding. Jonah was a prophet of the Lord, yet wofully fell. Therefore, be ye humble. And be watchful against a like lapse. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

We are also taught to have hope of those who do backslide. Be patient with them. Never give them up. Pray for them that they may turn again to the Lord; that, like the prodigal, each may quickly come to himself, and at once, spontaneously, return to his Father's house, to be warmed and melted again into greater love by the Father's overwhelming blessing.

But passing now to the history, we may note first, the PLACE of Jonah's home.

Over in the old world, slumbering on the hill side about two miles north east of Nazareth in Palestine, lies the modern village of el Meshad. This quaint spot, as it is reported to be, christian travelers tell us is very probably the site of the ancient town of Gath-Hepher, the home of our runaway prophet. By a constant tradition from the early christian centuries down to the present time, his tomb is here pointed out.

This makes it clear that Jonah was a prophet of the northern Kingdom, Israel, as Hosea and Amos, who prophesied soon after him, belonged to the southern kingdom, Judah. Gath-Hepher was in the boundaries of Zebulon, and Zebulon was one of the revolting ten tribes, all of whom inhabited the northern part of the country.

But note next, the TIME when Jonah lived.

In II Kings fourteen, twenty-five to twenty-seven, we read of Jereboam II, King of Israel, that "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-Hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel that it was very bitter; for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but he saved them by the hand of Jereboam, the son of Joash."

This text gives our prophet's father's name as Amittai, fixes his native place as Gath-Hepher, as already seen, and also shows that a prophecy of Jonah was fulfilled during the reign of Jereboam II.

We learn, too, from these verses that the prophecy was given at a time when Israel was at the lowest point of depression; when her "affliction was very bitter;" when "there was not any shut-up or left"—that is, not any confined or left at large—meaning there was none to act as a helper to Israel.

These particulars help to determine the time of the prophecy. The history given in the book of Kings shows that Jereboam's reign was marked by prosperity. In fulfillment of Jonah's prophecy, he worsted Assyria and raised Israel to her former greatness. His father Joash, however, who preceded him on the throne, had begun to reign when Israel was in subjection to Syria, and at an exceedingly low ebb in her history. Hence, it is very natural to credit Jonah's prophecy to the time of Joash, or, possibly, to the very early part of the reign

of Jereboam, before the better times had yet appeared. In either case, Jonah followed close upon Elisha, who died in Joash's reign.

Jonah was, therefore, as it seems, the earliest of the prophets whose utterances are collected in separate books. Hosea and Amos follow soon after him, or towards the latter part of Jereboam's reign, about eight-hundred years before Christ. The other prophets, Isaiah, Daniel and the rest, came later, on down to Malachai, four hundred years before Christ.

As to Jonah's earlier exercise of the prophetical office, we know but little. We are not given the text of his prophecy about the restoration of Israel under Jereboam. Nor are we informed of any other prophecies he may have uttered. All we know about him is (1), that he was a real historic character, the son of Amittai; (2), that both Ezra in the Old Testament and our Lord in the New Testament call him a prophet, and we must believe them; (3), that the passage in Second Kings tells of a prophecy of his that was, in a few years after its utterance, literally fulfilled; (4), that the book that bears his name is but one episode in his life experience, very probably occurring after he had uttered his earlier prophecies, and towards the latter part of his life; and (5), that his book is history rather than prophecy—not a record of his predictions, but an account of his experience and conduct at one period of his life.

With what else occurred in his history—his other acts and experiences—and God's dealings with him at other times—he himself and the other sacred penmen have not made us acquainted.

Most heartily, however, we ought to thank God for this one book, with its four short chapters, its marvellous miracles and surprising incidents, as well as for its multiplied practical lessons. Prayerfully, reverently and expectantly, let us turn to its pages and considering them carefully afresh, take some jottings therefrom as they arise, that we may, under the divine favor, not only be interested anew but also blessedly profited.

Treasure lies hid in this field of the word;
Buying it nevermore sell;
Seeking it out of this book of the Lord,
Richly within let it dwell.
Far above rubies these golden words prize,
Actions and thoughts to control;
Bind them as frontlets over thine eyes,
Laying them up in thy soul.

Called

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai saying: Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.—Jonah 1:1,2.

Endeavor with unruffled brow,
And with a mind serene,
To meet the duties of the Now—
The PRESENT and the SEEN.
Look before thee as thou goest,
Do the duty which thou knowest.
But think not thou canst live alone,
As if all men beside
Were pigmies round about the throne
Of thy contemptuous pride;
To the neighbor that thou knowest
Do the duty which thou owest.

—Lady Teignmouth.

III. CALLED.

This is the very first thing appearing in the record. Jonah was called and commissioned. He was called of God. "Now the word of the Lord came unto" him, says the first verse of the book.

This is a formula often used in the Scriptures. It is the common introduction to messages from God to chosen messengers. These are the exact words that preface the prophecies of Hosea, Joel, Micah and Zephaniah, while other prophets, in differing terms, ascribe their deliverances, not to themselves, but to God.

The formula is a promise and a proof of revelation.

But notice another thing about it which also strengthens the evidence of its inspiration. The common translation of the word here rendered "now" is "and." So the literal reading is, "AND the word of the Lord came."

But what is there in this fact apparently so little? Even this, The word "and," as all know, is equivalent to the phrase, "in addition to." With this very meaning it introduces Exodus, I Kings, Ezra and some other books, to show that their contents are added to the sacred writings which precede them, so as to form one continuous stream of history. This word, encasing a phrase, and introducing so many books and sections of books, serves to "string together the pearls of great price of God's revelations." It is used to "join on histories with histories, revelations with revelations," thus blending the different parts and books of the Holy Scriptures into one divine book.

The prophecy of Ezekiel is a sample of this usage. Its first sentence is "and it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." Here, as often elsewhere, the "and" is used with a purpose; that is, to connect with preceding prophecies, and with the national records that had gone before, just as, in all languages, the word "and" is employed to connect things together.

With this important word the book of Jonah begins. Its first sentence might be paraphrased: "Besides, or in addition to, the divine communications that came to others before him, the word of the Lord also came to Jonah, as follows." So, as already noted, both the use of this word, and of this common formula in opening the book, is a

strong proof that Jonah was under the direction of God's Holy Spirit, and that his narrative is history and not parable.

How thankful we ought to be for this evidence from the history of words and from scriptural usage. Plain it is from the very terms of this introductory formula that Jonah was actually called of God. We may not be able to tell how the word of the Lord came unto him. We are, nevertheless, most sure of the fact.

But this was not the first time the word of the Lord had sounded in the ears of the son of Amittai. He was called to the office of prophet before this. God now calls him again, calls earnestly, emphatically. "Arise, go." The repetition of verbs denotes emphasis. They hint excitement. They demand prompt action. The duty of obedience is a present, pressing obligation.

Nor will any one fail to observe the service was a special one,—a very unexpected and unheard of one. To the prophet it clearly was a very unwelcome one. He exceedingly disliked it. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it." He is commissioned to an alien nation. Other prophets had been sent to the Lord's chosen people. Like Daniel afterwards, and his great predecessor Elisha, Jonah now has his mission far beyond the bounds of his own land. He is commissioned to go "far off to the Gentiles," away to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

This mission, however, was far from suiting him. His heart rebelled against it. But the Great Ruler of the universe, having most lofty purposes in mind, took his own course and not Jonah's. Having all the years of the future before his vision, he knew what was best for the Ninevites, and for the prophet, too, and for the prophet's people, who were to be taught a great lesson from God's mercy to this heathen and despised nation. So he chose his unwilling servant to what, at that day, was a very unusual service, viz., to go to Nineveh "and cry against it" that its inhabitants might have a chance to repent.

Now it may be observed that this last statement hints an answer to the inquiry, why was Jonah called? The divine procedure in the whole case clearly intimates that there were high and benevolent reasons for his mission. Can any fail to trace them?

Observe, first, Israel was hardened and impenitent. For long years, in spite of warnings, entreaties and, at times, severe discipline for their sins, they had been prone to idolatry. After the revolt under Rehoboam, Jereboam I. set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel—centres of worship—to keep his people, the ten tribes, from going up to

Jerusalem, in Judah, for worship. He feared that if they kept going back to their old surroundings, and yearly renewing former hallowed associations, their hearts might be won back to the house of David. So he appointed the city of Dan, in the north of the kingdom, and Bethel, at the extreme south towards Jerusalem, as places for his people's stated devotions.

But the record is, "And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before" these idols. And worshipping BEFORE them, they were not long in losing all proper sense of the divine presence, and degenerating from the real worship of Jehovah to the actual worship of the idols.

In love and long suffering patience God sent Elijah to win the people back to himself. This ardent prophet wrought many miracles, yet secured no abatement of the calves.

Then Elisha, who had prayed for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, was sent, wrought more miracles to bring the people back, taught the schools of the prophets, and, though much respected by many, and very influential, he passed away with the worship of the calves still practised.

Speaking after the manner of men, The Lord marvelled. He was grieved to the heart. But his mercy still endured. Knowing that if he sent to the heathen THEY would repent, he chose Jonah for this work, and gave him his message to Nineveh, at that time the greatest city of the greatest empire of the world, and filled with a people hated by Israel above all others. He sent his servant far off to these Gentiles, in order that their prompt repentance under the first preaching of him, a stranger, might shame Israel his favored people, who, claiming to be God's elect, yet still remained unrepentant under the long, varied and oft repeated preaching, and heart-yearning entreaties, of their own prophets at all seasons.

The divine purpose might be thus stated. "The children have not hearkened to what the Lord commanded, sending to them by his servants the prophets, but have hardened their necks, and given themselves up to do evil before the Lord, to provoke him to anger, and, therefore, the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and preach unto her, so that Israel may be shown, in comparison with the heathen, to be the more guilty, when the heathen Ninevites shall repent, but my long favored people still remain in unrepentance.' " This was one reason why God sent Jonah to the Ninevites—to shame and reprove Israel.

Another purpose: By this mission the Lord meant to give a new proof that he was no respecter of persons, but that, as Peter long afterwards declared, "in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." The repentance of these Ninevites at the first preaching of the prophet, a stranger to them, "was an anticipatory streak of light ere the dawn of the full light to lighten the Gentiles." It was a hint, as God meant it to be, that all nations were going to be included in the one family of God. Jonah's mission was an earnest that the gospel would be given to the heathen. Its success was a proof that a heathen city furnished as proper a field for the labors of a prophet as Israel did, and one even more hopeful in results.

Moreover, the outcome in this case made very clear the great lesson, that the divine regard was not confined to the Jews alone, but went out to other nations, who are all under the general government of God.

These divine purposes for calling Jonah to preach in Nineveh, were meant to clearly show that Israel's exclusiveness and uncharitableness were very wrong, and that, at the same time, ours, if cherished, are just as wrong.

But other reasons in the divine mind for this mission to Syria's capital were such as these: God would teach the Jews and all others for all time, (1), that wickedness, if persisted in, will bring condign punishment; (2), that God has no pleasure in inflicting such punishment, but delights in the repentance of the guilty; and (3), that if Pagans yield so promptly under a single prophetic message, it behooves those who were continually instructed by the Lord's servants to seriously reflect on the guilt contracted by refusing those servants' God-prompted admonitions.

Thus high and far-reaching are seen to be the purposes of the Great Ruler over all in calling Jonah and sending him to preach repentance to the Ninevites. Surely, too, viewing the success of this holy and benevolent mission, well might all the Lord's professed people of that day, as did the Apostles and brethren later, after Peter's successful visit to Caesarea, exclaim in wonder and gratitude: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." If Israel's heart had been right, its people would thus have adoringly praised. And if Jonah's heart had been right, he would have exulted in his mission and its success, instead of being so naughtily rebellious as the narrative shows. The next chapter will reveal his astounding course in the matter.

But before passing to note his conduct, take this one practical lesson. God is yet often calling people to special duties. His summons comes in very clear tones to each one of us. His first call is for our love. "Son, give me thy heart." Our affection, and our full trust, is what our Heavenly Father wants.

And every right prompting heart sincerely responds:

"God calling yet! shall I not rise?
Can I his loving voice despise,
And basely his kind care repay?
He calls me still, can I delay?
God calling yet! I cannot stay;
My heart I yield without delay;
Vain world, farewell, from thee I part;
The voice of God has reached my heart."

Then, he calls us each to service. "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." "Run, speak to that young man." "Teach that class in the Sabbath School. Invite others to church and Christian Endeavor. Serve God in the kitchen, the school room, the store, on the farm. Be patient and Christ-like every where and always." It is the voice of God from on high—the same loving voice that called Jonah. With better spirit than Jonah should we ever seek the grace of prompt and willing obedience. Miss Havergal's sweet-worded exhortation well suits each child of God:

Just to ask him what to do
All the day,
And to make you quick and true
To obey;
Just to know the needed grace
He bestoweth,
Every bar of time and place,
Overfloweth.
Just to take thy orders straight
From the Master's own command;
Blessed day! when thus we wait
Always at our Sovereign's hand.

But sometimes God's call is to suffering, disappointment, or some hard duty. Yet, whatever the task or the trial he sets for us, he him-

self is always our sufficient help in it. His own gracious word through Isaiah is: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." In great variety of language, this promise is repeated a good many times in both Old and New Testament. So we need never fear to go down into any dark valley. Waiting on the Lord, he will strengthen our hearts.

"Just to trust, and yet to ask
Guidance still;
Take the training, or the task
As he will.
Just to take the loss or gain
As he sends it;
Just to take the joy or pain
As he lends it.
He who formed thee for his praise
Will not miss the gracious aim;
So to day and all the days
Shall be moulded for the same."

Hear, therefore, his call to love him, to serve him, and to endure hardness for him, if he wills it. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him and he will bring it to pass."

"Sweet infinite blue o'er-arches the rain;
Sweet infinite peace lies deeper than pain;
A sea, ever waveless, supports the wave's strife,
And God, ever changeless, this change-beaten life."

Truant.

But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.—Jonah 1:3.

O, Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve,
By foot or hand,
From thy command
Not to be served, but to serve.
And if I may,
I'd have this day
Strength from above
To set my heart
In heavenly art
Not to be loved, but to love.

—Maltbie D. Babcock.

IV.

TRUANT.

Called of the Lord, Jonah tried to run away. He rose up to flee, not to Nineveh, but far off in the opposite direction. No inner wish prompted him to preach to the enemies of his people. He had no desire for their conversion. His heart was not large enough, nor sufficiently filled with the Holy Spirit, to want the repentance of these Assyrians, of whom it was already prophesied that they should subdue Israel. So he shrank from the duty, revolted against it, and tried his best to escape it. He showed cowardice, presumption, daring, guilt. The pressing obligation, however, he could not throw off.

Will it be deemed a curious inquiry to ask: Was Jonah's name given to him prophetically? Some have so thought. The name Jonah means, dove. And as the first dove that went out from Noah could find no rest until it returned again to the ark, so Jonah could not find rest or safety in trying to get away from God. By bitter experience he learns IN FACT, in that early day, what, in our time, Joseph Cook has put in terse FORM,—“the way to flee from God is to flee to him.” To escape his frown, turn from wrong doing unto him in loving obedience, and get his smile. Come to him for his love and protection. His friendship secured is safety and peace.

But, perhaps, another hint evolves from the prophet's name. The dove is everywhere the emblem of “mourning love.” Jonah really loved his people, and grieved to do any thing for the good of any other nation that did not love them. Hence, in his book we find record of his defect, his want of trust in God, and so his unloving zeal towards the Assyrians whom God was to use as instruments against Israel. Perhaps his name hints of the character by which he was known, or wished to be known, among his people—one who moaned, or mourned, over them.

But note next how the truant prophet's shirking was shown. He “rose up to flee unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord.” Literally the words read, “from being in the presence of the Lord.” They no doubt mean, from being in God's presence as a servant, or minister. The idea can hardly be that Jonah thought he could get away from Jehovah altogether, or find a place where God was not. He knew better than that. He was no doubt familiar with David's thought in Psalm 139, put interrogatively to intensify the affirmation, “Whither

shall I go from thy spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy presence?" This is not what he tried to do. His attempt was to get rid of his office of prophet. He had been under prophetic influence before this. He had, metaphorically speaking, been standing before the Lord ready to do his bidding. But now, holding, as he doubtless did, the common belief of his people, that "the Shekinah does not dwell out of the land;" that is, believing that prophetic influence came upon chosen messengers only within the territorial limits of Judah and Israel, he tried to get beyond these limits as fast and as far as he could. Called to go on a mission for God many miles away to the northeast, he at once determines to escape to the most distant regions of the west. There, as he supposed, he would not be constrained to serve as a prophet.

Unexpected frankness, too, does he show in the matter. Pettishly, it is clear, and yet unhesitatingly, he gives the reason for his misconduct. He much disliked his commission. In chapter four, two, he says to God, "was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country. Therefore, I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Knowing well God's loving kindness, he forecast that he would spare the Ninevites on their repentance, and he was hence unwilling to bear a message of mercy to them, first, because he thought the outcome would result in his being considered a false prophet; perhaps, in bringing punishment on him; and second, because these Assyrians had already made war on his people, and were, as he may have known, hereafter to be their conquerors. So he refused God's service in this particular.

He did as men often do who dislike God's commands. He made prompt effort to get as far as possible away from under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and from the place where he could possibly fulfill this special command. "Arise, go to Nineveh," spake the voice of the Lord to him suddenly, unexpectedly. Instantly he arose. But he rose up, not as other prophets, to obey, but to disobey; not slowly, nor irresolutely, but "to FLEE from being in the presence of the Lord." He renounced his office; tried hard to be freed from those prophetic impulses with which he had not courage and faith to comply. The term truant, or run-away prophet, may very appropriately be given him.

And the steps in his truancy were taken at once. He "went down to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from

the presence of the Lord." Joppa, now called Jaffa, was at that time the only port of Palestine on all the Mediterranean coast. In fact here was the only harbor of any note, during most of the Jewish history, or until Herod built the artificial port of Caesarea.

Fifty miles from Gath-hepher off to Joppa Jonah hastened. Exceeding vividness marks the narrative. Jonah "rose up." He "rose up to flee." At once he "went down to Joppa"—the country descending from Gath-hepher all the way to the coast. He "found a ship"—perhaps searched hastily and eagerly from vessel to vessel till he came across this one going to that distant Spanish port right away. That just suited him. He engaged passage, "paid the fare, and went down into" the boat—into the hold, or cabin below—his purpose being "to go with them"—with the crew—officers and sailors—"unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." He was in a great hurry to get away from prophetic influence, as far away as he could, to the very end of the known world westward. Industrious he took every step, until, as he supposed, he had cut himself loose from the land where his office bound him.

There seemed now nothing else to do. Winds and waves would do the rest. He had but to be still and wait. So he thought, and at once went down into the ship to enjoy leisure. There his excitement subsiding, and reaction coming on, he was soon fast asleep—so sound asleep that the raging of the fierce storm that soon burst did not awake him. The captain of the vessel, in dire alarm had to do that, and plead with him to pray to his God for them in the imminent peril.

Ah! Jonah, Jonah, God is in the boat. Even a heathen captain feels it. God is on the sea with you. God is in Tarshish if you go there. You cannot flee his presence. Nor can you escape his claim on your heart and life. O prophet! strangely recreant to duty, sadly truant to service, why, why this effrontery to your best Friend? Oh, how are you going to answer before assembled worlds at the great day? Be sure your sin will find you out. How, think you, will the Lord deal with you, to make you willing and obedient? O, beware, lest some startling measure of discipline burst soon and suddenly to send a shudder into your very soul. Or, what if the Lord's patience does not hold out, and, by a single stroke, you are summond impenitent to heaven's judgment? O, fleeing prophet, turn back, turn back. To "flee from God, flee to him." In penitence and love flee to him, and safety and bliss will be yours forever.

But Jonah-truant has solemn and practical lessons for us all.

Note some of them. One is: Do not misinterpret Providence as Jonah did. That ship being there just then; being billed to sail so soon, to such a far away point, most likely seemed to him very providential. He would be tempted to think, surely the Lord is favoring my getting away, or this ship would not be here just when I needed it.

But if Jonah thought so he was mistaken. The Lord had very plainly told him to go to Nineveh. Providence did not favor his fleeing to Tarshish, as he soon found out. The case is clear. Taking the rebellious man's free agency, and his present determined waywardness, all into the account, Providence did so overrule and order that he should go aboard that vessel; the purpose being, however, that, from experience gained there, he might be subdued, brought to his senses, and made willing to turn back to execute his Nineveh mission. Providence seemed—only SEEMED—to favor his self-willed purpose for a time. But as soon as the plan of Providence was unfolded, it was clearly seen to coincide with, and to strongly enforce, the word before spoken.

And thus it ever is. Of nothing may we be surer than that God's providence and his holy word never contradict each other. The inspired word says this and that. Divine Providence, rightly interpreted, never says the opposite. Does the word read: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy?" Neither Providence, nor the prompting of the Holy Spirit ever teach otherwise.

And just so, too, with the kindred command: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." No opportunity, however favorable, for strolling in parks, hunting, boating, riding, visiting friends, doing secular work, or even over-sleeping, and no temptation or prompting of heart to any of these things, is to be considered providential, or the suggestion of the Spirit. The word of the Lord teaches just the opposite, and that word is our rule of conduct in all cases.

The substance of what God in his word says to us is: "Turn away thy foot from doing thine own pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honorable." Keep the day, "not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words" during its sacred hours. So doing, blessed reward will follow. It is pledged from heaven. "Then . . . will I cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." No christian pleasing God ever wants to be absent from church. When his heart is right it declares with

David: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O, Lord of Hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of" thy house. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" elsewhere.

Like this, too, is it in all other duties in life. No real providential pointing, when rightly understood, ever contradicts Scripture teaching. The spoken and written word of the Lord is to be our unfailing guide, just as it was the rule of conduct for wayward Jonah that day when the evil spirit in his heart led him astray. It is only the unsanctified, unconsecrated and self-deceived heart that will ever interpret Providence as contradicting God's command. If we strictly obey the written word of the Lord, we may be sure that Providence will smile upon us in all our ways.

Hence a closely allied lesson clearly follows. No servant of the Lord should ever try to shirk duty. Each of us should obey God—implicitly obey. Where he calls serve, and when he calls, as regularly as clock-work, in the church, in the family, in the closet, and out in society; never flinching however hard the task. Our Father's plan is wondrous. It is loving, wise, far-reaching, high and holy; will bring infinite glory to himself, and, followed heartily, will procure untold present and eternal blessing to every loving worker in his service.

Sometimes even honest ministers of the gospel become discouraged. Some of them have been known to shrink from incumbent duty, and want to flee to other fields than those to which the Lord has called them. In all possible cases, however, there is more danger in disobedience than in obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice," ever better than any thing unrequired.

Two considerations urge to steadfastness and perseverance. One is, God can arrest his fugitive by storms from without, or from within. And second, nothing but shame and distress can come on those who flee from their proper place and work.

From the whole narrative in this book the lesson to every minister of the gospel is, obey God. Amid every form of hardship and danger try to do as he directs. Obedience should be willing and prompt. It should be implicit and unreserved. The exercise of it demands much. To gain it there is need of prayer and faith and patience and often the spirit of true self denial. The clear call of God may be to go far hence to some unknown and supposedly undesirable field. If the summons is unmistakable, as Jonah's was, then the duty is to arise and go. It is wrong to run away, or even to sit still. Go and prophesy in the place divinely selected.

But sometimes the disobedience is shown by running away from a field where the Lord has already set his servant. There is danger of error here, too. Opposition and discouragement are not always a call of God to seek another charge. Yet the tendency at the present day, among even pious ministers when opposed and disheartened, is to be tempted to go elsewhere. If the fashion of the day takes hold of them, they begin to think, and brood over the thought, "I could do better almost any where else than here where I am." This disturbed posture of mind keeps the man from being as happy and as useful as he ought to be.

God sometimes wants a minister to move—even to go far hence. Sometimes he would have him hold on where he is. The great thing is to determine the Lord's will; then obey.

But how determine? On this point are we not fully authorized to believe and say, that if the man of God keeps faithfully working away, praying submissively and believingly, and waiting in patience, the Great Head of the church will, sooner or later, make the path of duty clear. This may be done at a time, or in a way, different from what we expect or desire. In God's own time it will surely be done.

"It may not be MY way,
It may not be THY way,
And yet in his OWN way
The Lord will provide."

But another thing: reproving sin is a hard duty, especially the sins of the great and the rich. But it cannot be innocently omitted. The word of the Lord enjoins reproof. It denounces against the guilty the judgments of God before whom all sins are committed. He who faithfully divides the word of truth must show Bible teaching on this subject as well as on more pleasant themes. As much as its invitations, the warnings of Scripture are important. Often they do great good. Nineveh, being warned by Jonah, escaped calamity by heeding the warning. David the king, when fearlessly and righteously rebuked by Nathan who was sent to him for the purpose, deeply repented and humbled himself; and hence we have the fifty-first psalm.

Too often, however, unbelief and the fear of man start countless objections to faithfulness, which, being yielded to, sin goes unrebuked. The fall of man brought cowardice into the human heart. It brought the spirit of shrinking from duty. This is a part of man's sin.

How strange it makes even devout christians sometimes act. When desirous of escaping the cross, or of declining obedience in some supposedly perillous circumstance, what irrational notions and absurd actions they are capable of. Like Adam, they sometimes try to hide from the Lord "among the trees of the garden," or, imitating Jonah, attempt to escape God's presence by flight.

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me." This called for boldness, fearlessness, conscientious courage; not for harshness, or the tone of impatience. The truth is to be preached, sometimes, if occasion demands it, even unwelcome truth, but ever is it to be preached in love. Occasionally rebuke of sin calls for outspoken, emphatic, ringing words. Usually the most surely effective way is to speak in great tenderness, and kindness, and under the manifest power of the Spirit of Christ. May our God, who has a right to the honest services of all, and who calls all to his service here or there, to this duty or to that, by granting large measures of enabling grace, blessedly endue and strengthen every preacher of the gospel at all times for every duty of every nature.

But other people have duties as well as ministers. Each is unmistakably called of God into his service. The reader of these lines, whether in the church or out of it, has a mission from heaven. The word of the Lord has come, dear friend, unto you. Ringing from on high it calls: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." But alas! alas! too many are like Jonah. Too many run away, accept not the Lord, nor work in the field to which they are called.

Thus it is that human nature always wants to behave. This type of character has been common in all ages. When Jesus was one day preaching at Capernaum many thought his words were "hard sayings," and going away from him, "walked no more with him." The rich young man, too, "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Were they afraid of trusting themselves to the Lord? or were they ashamed of staying with him and not doing what he said?

Oh, far too many people among us are like the offended disciples and the rich young ruler. Often when God secretly calls men to prayer and christian duties, they go and immerse themselves in business. Or, when alone, and God says something to their souls they do not like, they hurry into company to drown his voice. If he calls them

to make sacrifices for his poor, or in other ways for his cause, they rush into increased expenses for themselves; often into totally unnecessary self indulgences. Constantly are people just going the opposite to the divine call. In this part of his history Jonah is but a sample of recreants every where—but a type of those who, when God calls them, disobey the call.

And oh! how he deals with such in all cases where he don't abandon them. He lets them have their own way for a time as he did the prophet, but soon he hems them in, and encompasses them with difficulties, so that, as Augustine says, they shall be brought to "flee back from God displeased to God appeased." Pray devoutly that every shirker from duty may quickly hasten so to do.

To every truant disciple, the language of the revived christian heart, if spoken out, would be: "I pray God that the whale may swallow you. That is, that you may be stopped in your course, brought back to God, made very successful in his service, and crowned with his rich blessing forevermore. All his dealings with you are meant for this. O praise his name. Accept his will. Obey his voice, and just see what he will do with you and for you, in this life and the next. Let the substance of your own prayer, daily and hourly sincerely offered, be that heart one of Miss Havergal:"

Jesus, Master, whom I serve,
Though so feebly and so ill,
Strengthen hand and heart and nerve
All thy bidding to fulfil;
Open thou mine eyes to see
All the work thou hast for me.

Jesus, Master, wilt thou use
One who owes thee more than all?
As THOU wilt! I will not choose,
Only let me hear thy call.
Jesus, let me always be
In thy service glad and free.

Bestormed

But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then were the mariners afraid, and cried every man unto his God, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them.—Jonah 1:4, 5.

O, Ruler of the world, when at thy call
Uprises the great deep, and throws himself
Upon the continent, and overwhelms
Its cities; who forgets not, at the sight
Of these tremendous tokens of thy power,
His pride, and lays his strifes and follies by!
O, from these sterner aspects of thy face
Spare me and mine; nor let us need the wrath
Of the mad, unchained elements, to teach
Who rules them, and to make us do thy will.

—Bryant.

BESTORMED.

The course of sin never runs smooth continuously. It is sure to break into whirlpools and rapids sometime. Not seldom it does this soon; as truant Jonah was not long in finding out in his own case. In disobedience he had turned away from toward Nineveh, hasted to Joppa on the sea, found a ship going to Tarshish, went aboard, paid the fare, went below deck and settled himself to sound sleep, thinking to get away from the presence of the Lord in official work. He has done his all. Now God's part begins. Jonah has taken his measures. God now takes his.

Up to this point the wayward man was permitted to have his own way. So a long suffering Father often deals with those who disobey his call. He lets them do their own will for a time. "He waits in the tranquility of his almightiness until they have completed their preparations, and then, when man has ended, he begins, so that man may see the more that it is his doing." The Lord takes the fleeing in their flight, the wise in their counsels, sinners in their sins, and draws them back to himself, compelling them to return. Jonah hoped to find rest on the sea, and lo! a tempest—a very fierce one—so fierce that "the ship thought to be broken." That is, all on board felt sure the vessel would go to pieces.

On that sea such violent storms often sprung up. They were called Euraquillo; sometimes Euroclydon. It was one of these that over nine hundred years later, or about the year of our Lord sixty-two, wrecked the vessel on which the Apostle Paul was sailing. God prepared that storm, as he did the one that overtook Jonah, and as he does all the storms that now work his will. With startling suddenness these often come. Man knows not what is but a little way before him. He "proposes, but God disposes." The fleeing prophet thinks he is now safe, since the vessel that carries him has put out to sea and is heading away toward the far west. "But the Lord sent a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."

The Lord's time has now come. The disciplining of the prophet now begins. In softness and quiet let us admire and adore the lofty and matchlessly sure way of the divine procedure.

And note well first, the terribleness of the Lord was meant in

mercy. The storm was violent, but no wonder. The case demanded something startling and extraordinary. How easy for Omnipotence to use such means, making his work thorough, and, at the same time, doing it with merciful intent.

The divine purposes in this case are clear. First, to subdue Jonah; to melt his obstinacy to love, his rebellion to obedience, and make him willing to execute his commission to Nineveh. Second, to bring about the real conversion of that ship's crew of heathen mariners—a wonderful and a merciful thing. Third, to give the Ninevites undoubted proof that the prophet was really sent from God to them. Jonah was a sign to them, our Lord says; that is, he was a wonder—a miraculous messenger to them. They knew of his entombment in the fish, and his deliverance after so long a time. This thoroughly convinced them that he was commissioned by the Supreme God to deliver his message to them. A fourth divine purpose was, in the experience of Jonah, to furnish the world a type of Christ, who was to be three days and three nights "in the heart of the earth."

These were the leading purposes of the Great Ruler in making use of the sea, and the storm, the sailors and the fish spoken of in this chapter,—to-wit, to subdue Jonah, convert the mariners, give a sign to the Ninevites, and furnish to all people a remarkable type of Christ in several particulars.

The present chapter, however, may only attempt to partially unfold the first and second of these points; that is, the subduing of Jonah, and the conversion of the sailors. And all there is need to say may, it is thought, be properly clustered around a single core word or two—Jonah Bestormed.

This is the theme—Jonah bestormed a blessing to himself and to others. The lesson is not hidden. It is near the surface, and easily learned. Following carefully, one by one, the items, or incidents of the history, down to the point where the storm raged its fiercest, will show how the wayward prophet was brought to his senses, and also, how the mariners were gradually, and more and more deeply, impressed in a reverent and a right way by all that occurred, and were thus led along toward their final decision for the Lord God, who made the heaven, the sea, and all things else.

Looking the record, we see that the very first thing that awed these heathen sailors was the fierceness of the tempest. They had a sea-faring experience, had buffeted many storms, but felt now at once that these winds and waves were super-ordinary. Their notion was,

the gods must have sent them. So they "were afraid," says the verse. They thought their gods were angry with them. That was a common heathen idea. Most Gentiles of that day had some notion of a supreme power, but no right knowledge of the true God. They knew nothing of a loving, merciful Heavenly Father, who ruleth over all, and careth for all who love him. They had always been taught that¹ each nation had its own gods; that "there were gods many and lords many;" and that when these were angry they at once visited calamity upon the creature offending. This belief now called forth their frightened prayers.

All the way through the crisis, we observe they did what they could. As soon as convinced this was an unusual storm, they "were afraid, and cried every man to his god." That was a sensible thing to do, ordinarily—to pray to God. Who would not do so in time of danger? But these men were probably mostly Phoenicians. May be some of them were of other nations. All of them, doubtless believed in gods that they fancied to be real, but that we know to be only imaginary. Long ago, each of them had chosen his own tutelary, or guardian, deity; and now in peril each begs help of his own. Poor men! they may have been sincere, but their knowledge was wofully deficient. As yet they know not the true God. Nevertheless, that same true God over all hears their cry, and so orders other things immediately following, that they are led to "know him, whom to know aright is everlasting life." Gratefully learn, God "hears even ignorant prayer, when ignorance is not wilful and sin."

But these sailors also worked. To prayer they added effort. "They cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them." They are only experimenting, however. They know not what the real cumbrance of the ship is. They know not yet that sin and disobedience in the person of the man asleep below deck is the real burden endangering the vessel and all aboard. This they must find out before they are safe. The true God, who is managing will lead them to the discovery.

How will he do it? The steps are well defined. The gods have not heard their cries for help. The storm increases in fury. Throwing out the lading brings no abatement. Something else must be done. The thought comes: perhaps some other god is angry, and we have not besought the right one. May be this stranger down in the hull has offended his god, whom he claims to be above all other gods, and the storm will not stop till his god is placated.

All this, like a flash, goes through the mind, of the captain, especially, and off he speeds to Jonah's side, wakes him with words of reproof for his indolence and indifference in such a danger, and urges him to prayer. Poor Jonah! guilty in conscience, sullen and rebellious, fatigued with the journey from Joppa, long and hurried; under strain of excitement in escaping from duty; perhaps ashamed to stay in company with others, or look them in the face, had hid himself away as best he could before the storm set in, where, thinking himself now escaped from prophetic influence, and reaction from all he had just passed through coming on, he had gone to sleep. Gone to sleep, at such a time! And so deeply he slept, that the raging waves and winds did not wake him.

Those who have made a study of the question, tell us that sullenness alone, aside from fatigue, induces sleep. However that may be, we know that grief does. The night before the crucifixion, in the garden, at a crisis time, Jesus found the disciples "asleep for sorrow." Jonah was now held in heavy, or deep, slumber, such as Adam's before a life companion was provided him, or as Sisera's before the nail was driven into his temple. It was his duty as a prophet of the Lord to call the heathen to prayers. But now a heathen man has to call him. Literally, the shipmaster sharply said to him, "What is there to thee sleeping?" That is, "what reason hast thou for sleeping?" or, "What meanest thou by sleeping?" The words are an exclamation of indignant surprise at the unreasonableness of the sleeper's conduct in such a crisis. Charged, as he was by his office, with the weal of all on board, the shipmaster would, in the common peril, have one common prayer. So he urges, "arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." "Think upon us for good," he means. As David says, "I am poor and needy, the Lord thinketh upon me,"—"FOR me," that is, "on my behalf."

But in this captain's words get a glimpse of another heathen conception. When this chief officer of the vessel says to Jonah, "call upon thy God," he uses the lower term—the one applied to the HEATHEN deities. When right after, he says, "if so be that God will think upon us," he employs an entirely different word. His term now is the name designating the Supreme Ruler over all. He thus seems to acknowledge Jonah's God as THE God. Using the name of the true God here, as he does, hints to us, as Calvin argues, and Perowne words it, "that behind and above the many gods whom the heathen invented for themselves, they retained the idea, vague, perhaps, and indistinct

for the most part, but starting into prominence in times of danger and distress such as this, of one supreme God by whose providence the world is governed, and in whose hand are the life and safety of men. In this view it is not any heathen prayer that Jonah is asked to offer. Rather, it is the prayer of the rational creature to the God of heaven who is able to help."

That prayer was no doubt offered. And it was most surely answered. But not immediately, and not at all in the way the mariners and Jonah wished. The All-wise had his own plan—his own beneficent purpose. He designed that Jonah should learn lessons from these heathen, as well as from his own experience, that would humble him and make him a better man. And he designed that these heathen should learn from Jonah, and from the outcome of the storm, about himself, and become worshippers of the true God. So the storm raged on, the seamen's and Jonah's prayers unanswered for the present.

On the point of despair, resort was then had to the lot. No apparent help coming from prayer, or from casting the tackling out of the ship, the sailors conclude that the storm is sent upon them by the gods as a judgment for some crime committed by one of their number, and they take this method of detecting the culprit.

Such belief was not uncommon in those early centuries. Cicero tells of Diagoras on a voyage, when a storm arose, and the sailors charged him with being its cause. But he simply pointed them to the other vessels in the same plight with themselves, and asked if they thought that these too carried Diagoras. Horace, in one of his odes, declares that he would not put to sea in the same boat with a man who had provoked the anger of the gods, because, in such cases, the innocent often suffered with the guilty. This idea impressed upon the minds of these mariners, they cast lots.

The Great God is directing in the matter. He sent the storm to arrest Jonah, proposing in a marvellous way to rescue him therefrom. But he will use human agency in all the fore-running events down to the last act when he directly puts forth his might. This being his method, he provided that the mariners should be set upon divining why the storm came. And when they cast lots, he, who has the whole disposing of them in control, directed that the lot fall on Jonah; as before this among his people he had guided it to the discovery of Achan, and afterwards, of Jonathan. The Lord God overruled the lot in the case of Jonah as he did the sign which the Philistines sought. He made the heifers that were yoked to draw the ark take

the way to Bethshemish, that the Philistines might know that the plague came to them, not by chance, but from himself. So the lot fell upon the fugitive prophet, not by any virtue of the lots, especially the lots of heathen, but by the will of him who guides things all uncertain to man.


To this ship's crew the lot points out the culprit. What will they do with him? Cast him into the sea at once? So would rasher, wickeder men. But these are of a different type. They gave him opportunity to speak for himself. Even in the midst of the wild tumult and storm, they held a court, as it were, in the vessel. They seem to proceed as deliberately as if no danger was imminent. Uneducated and untaught, these sailors imitated the good order of tribunals of justice. They allow the prisoner a hearing and a defense. They sift every thing accurately, as men who are to give account of their judgment. The roaring sea accused the culprit. The lot witnessed against him. Yet not even *THUS* did they pass sentence upon him, until he, the accused, shall be the accuser of his own sin.

Oh, where was there ever a scene to equal this? Who can tell why, in the very acme of fright, and jeopardy, such leniency and courtesy was shown toward this stranger whom they knew not? Surely, as Crysostom says, they were led to this dignified course "by the disposal of God. For God, by all this, instructed the prophet to be humane and mild, all but saying aloud to him 'Imitate these uninstructed sailors. They think not lightly of one soul, nor are unsparing as to one body, thine own. But thou, for thy part, gavest up a whole city with so many myriads. They, discovering thee to be cause of the evils which befell them, did not even thus hurry to condemn thee. Thou, having nothing whereof to accuse the Ninevites, didst abandon them to destruction. Thou, when I bade thee go, and by thy preaching, call them to repentance, obeyedst not. These, untaught, do all, compass all, in order to recover thee, already condemned, from punishment.' "

Searching the annals of all secular history through and through it would be hard to find a procedure to match this. "While the fury of the waves and the tempest constantly increased, and every instant was precious to those who prized their lives, this heathen crew patiently instituted an investigation with almost judicial calmness." Certain it is that all these steps are taken "by the disposal of God."

But further, the mariner's minds, already impressed, are soon more impressed by Jonah's words. He answers straightway and frankly. •

But before we hear his words, look at him. By the captain brought up on deck before the lot was cast, he stands there now, along with the whole ship's crew, a changed man. The emergency has recalled him to his true self. All the better part of his character now comes out, as the rest of the chapter shows. His conduct is henceforth dignified and manly, worthy of a servant and prophet of Jehovah. The Spirit of the Lord is upon him, and he shows it in his undoubted sincerity, tone of voice, and manner.

 Mid the excitement and danger, hear how the questions of those managing the case throng upon him. "Tell us, we pray thee for whose cause this evil is upon us? What is thine occupation and whence comest thou? What is thy country? and of what people art thou? Even before he could utter a word in reply, how their queries must have gone home to his conscience.

"What is your business?"

"The office of a prophet which I have left."

"Whence comest thou?"

"From standing before God as his inspired servant."

"What is thy country? of what people art thou?"

"The people of God whom I quitted for heathen, not to win them to the Lord, as he commanded, but to use another company of them, without their knowing what they did, to help me escape from duty."

Conscience flashed these answers through his own soul as the questions hurriedly came to him. Then he spake aloud for all present, answering simply the central point to which all their hurried inquiries focussed.

"I am a Hebrew, and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Well done, Jonah! That was faithful preaching, and the fruit it bore was immediate. For "then were the men exceedingly afraid."

He had told them before that he had fled "from being before Jehovah." But they then only thought of Jehovah as being the God of the Hebrews, on a par with the gods of other nations, no greater, no stronger, nor more holy.

But now when Jonah, in most convincing way, adds, that he whose service he had forsaken is "the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land," they were startled with the thought. They felt how awful a thing it was to be in the hands of such a Being. Here is the sea raging. The Lord God made it and all things. Therefore, it is surely he who has stirred it to its depths. Able to do the one,

much more the other. It is a less thing to lash the sea into fury, than it was to make it at the first. What shall we do? We are powerless before such an Almighty One.

With this feeling of reverence and fear overwhelming them, no marvel that they thrust quick upon him their words,—not so much now of inquiry, as of amazement and reproach—"Why hast thou done this?" Yes, why, indeed. Astonishing that one who fears such a God, and has had revelations from him, and also has received from him a personal call to a special service, would flee rather than obey such a call.

We may well suppose these thoughts forced themselves on the mariners. They are puzzled over the mystery of Jonah's flight. They cannot understand it. Why did the worshipper of the One true God flee from his God—an honored servant from his Lord—a son from a kind Father—a believer from his Almighty Friend? Their question, showing exceeding surprise on their part, was well suited to produce in his mind a strong feeling of reprobation of his own act.

And having thus uttered their feeling of disapproving wonder, they at once ask "What shall we do unto thee?" They ask the prisoner at the bar to pronounce sentence upon himself. "What shall we do unto thee?"

In this inquiry, at such a time, in such a pressure, get a glimpse of their reverence for Jehovah, and in a measure also for his servant. Instead of at once ridding themselves of him as the acknowledged cause of their calamity, they appeal to him for a decision. It seems clear they are now convinced he is a prophet. So they ask him the mind of his God.

As one receiving communications from your God—the Supreme Ruler—O tell us what is his will? What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" That is, that it may be quiet from pressing upon us, and being hostile to us. We are in fearful jeopardy. And you are the cause of it, as the lot pointed out, and you yourself acknowledge.

Such was their plea. They were on the point of despair, "for the sea wrought and was tempestuous." It was growing more and more boisterous. Literally, "It was going, and being tossed." As Jerome, quoted by Pusey, says: "It was going as it was bidden; it was going to avenge its Lord; it was going, pursuing the fugitive prophet. It was swelling every moment, and, as though the sailors were too tardy, was rising in yet greater surges, showing that the vengeance of the

Creator admitted not of delay." So the storm raged, and things are now rapidly nearing a crisis.

But let us pause here a moment for evident lessons. One is, be thoughtful and watchful of self. Ministers of the gospel, who have Jonah's office to speak in the name of God and preach repentance, should ask themselves, What is my business? I have professed to give myself wholly to my Lord. He has loaded me with his benefits. I approach him daily as a Friend. What is my business? Oh, not to run away from him. Not to seek any Tarshish when he calls me to Nineveh—to any work I do not like. Surely not. But to live for him, to stay in the harness, to despise the things of earth, to behold the things of heaven, and lead others to the home on high. This is the duty of those occupying the sacred office.

And Sabbath school teachers, parents and all christians rest under like solemn obligations. The Lord has assigned each to a sphere of work in his service. Never, never should any one run away from it. True, the Heavenly Father may at times call his child to other duties—to work elsewhere—but he will never take him to the world, nor any where out of his service. He wants us to be busied in doing his will. To every one so engaged he says: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Another lesson is, strive to be exemplary in all things. The harmfulness of the believer's inconsistencies is incomputable. To see an older christian, or a prominent christian, going astray is the marvel of the young christian, often the repulsion of those beginning to seek the way, and the hardening of the unbeliever. All nature—"stormy wind fulfilling his word"—and every class among men, seem to cry out to, and against, the unfaithful christian; "why hast thou done this?" No wonder the world has the golden proverb: "Consistency is a jewel." Surely, no where does it shine more charmingly than in the christian's life. Oh, covet, gain, and wear it ever.

Another practical lesson is the duty of the unconverted to rouse up to their highest interests. Jonah's deep sleep was an emblem of the sinner's lethargy,—an emblem, too, of the errorist's usually unconcerned security. "Oh, awake thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God." The unconverted have no idea of the imminent dangers around them, because they are slumbering in spiritual indifference, and unconcern. Their direst need is a clear and vivid realization of the solemn and weighty duties of life and of eternity. To this may every sleeper be soon and fully aroused by the blessed Holy Spirit, as was Jonah by the captain of that tempest tossed vessel. Amen.

Overboard.

And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you. . . . So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging.—Jonah 1:12, 15.

They that go down to the sea in ships,
These see the works of Jehovah.
For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.
They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths;
Their soul melteth away because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits end.
Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.

—David.

VI.

OVERBOARD

Yes, that is the next thing about our runaway prophet. He thought to escapé to Tarshish. The sailors soon put him into the Mediterranean. They did not wish to do it. They tried their best to save the ship and themselves without resorting to such extremity. They showed carefulness, dignity, and great patience. They proceeded very deliberately, even in the midst of the greatest peril. But the way of Providence was surely against them. Step by step they were unmistakably led up to doing as they did. Fully convinced, at length, that they could not escape with this runaway Hebrew aboard, they offer him a sacrifice, as it were, for the lives of all the others on the ship.

Were they right in doing this? Closely scan the history a little farther and see assuredly that the whole thing was of the Lord. Behold how his unswerving overruling led on without a break to the final issue.

We are told minutely how it was. The officers of the boat had innocently taken Jonah aboard. God sent the storm. The men called upon their gods to stay it; threw the wares out of the ship; awaked the sleeping passenger; cast lots that designated him as the culprit; hurried their questions upon him; grew awed at his manner and answers; spake their amazement and reproach; and then, convinced he was a prophet of the Supreme God, and seeing the waves increase in fury, they press him to decide his own punishment. "What shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm unto us."

Jonah, now fully recalled to his true self, detains them not. At once he authoritatively declares the only course in the case. Most evidently prompted by the Spirit of God he directs: "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this tempest is upon you." Humble now, and penitent, he pronounces sentence upon himself.

Had he a right to do this? Only under the sure direction of heaven. Without the command of God, neither Jonah nor the sailors might dispose of his life. For him to give it up himself would be suicide. For them to take it would be murder, unless the divine will required this of him and of them.

The fugitive might, indeed, surrender himself to their will. But he does more. He incites them to the deed. This he had no right

to do except in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly so moved, his word to them is authoritative. "Take me up and cast me into the sea,—for I know that for my sake this tempest is upon you."

His word "know" assures he had a revelation, and that God willed he should be thrown overboard. He would not cast himself into the angry waves. But when summoned by the voice of God speaking plainly in his heart, it became his duty to summon them to execute sentence upon him.

They, however, hesitate. They cannot at once bring themselves to do as he bids. They must save his life if possible. No doubt they were affected by the prophets candid confession, and by his self-controlled, submissive conduct. They feared, too, to lay hands on Jehovah's representative among them. So "they rowed hard" to get back to land. But they could not, for "the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them."

"They rowed hard." The Hebrew is, "they dug." Like the phrase, "ploughed the main," the term suggests great effort. They put their oars well and firmly in the sea, and turned up the water as men turn up the earth by digging. But in vain. God willed it not. For the storm, so far from abating, only raged the more.

O, friend, far from God, behold these now penitent subdued heathen! Learn from them. The prophet had pronounced sentence against himself. But they will not lay hands on him if they can help it. So, straining every muscle, they strive to get back to the shore and avoid bloodshed. Willing were they to lose life under necessity, rather than cause its loss directly.

What a contrast to the scene around the cross on that central day of the world's history! Some who were the professed people of God then cried, "crucify him, crucify him." "These are bidden." Jerome says, "to put to death; the sea rages, the tempest commands; and they are careless as to their own safety, while anxious about another's."

But in the next verse, see still farther marked evidence of the great and real change these seamen had experienced. They had questioned, devised, struggled, done all they could, and were on the point of despair. "Wherefore they cried unto the Lord,"—cried unto Jehovah. The crisis is just at hand.

Have you ever been there, my reader? Have you ever prayed and worked, and worked and prayed, and watched and waited, and prayed and worked, again and again, for something as dear to you as your own life? Your heart was set upon it. You feel you cannot live

without it. But your faith is tried over and over again till at last you can bear up no longer. Then you break down and cry to the Lord as never before. All your past prayers seemed no prayer compared to the outpouring of your soul to God now.

It may have been the illness of a fond darling. You held the hand, felt the pulse, watched the breathing, gave the medicine, smoothed the couch, called the doctor again and again, tried to smile and speak cheery words in tender, encouraging tones when your heart was almost breaking. For hours at a time, night after night, you kept your vigils at the bedside,—kept whispering your prayers at every quiet moment, hope and fear swaying alternate in your breast, your body wearing out without your knowing it, (so wonderfully were you sustained physically), till after while the doctor holds out hope no longer, and all friends look their belief that the end is nearing. Then you can bear up no longer, but hurry to a private room where, alone with God, your tears rain in showers, you sob uncontrollably, and you pray as you never knew any thing about before. O, God, must he, she, depart? If so, thy will be done. Do help me to say it. But oh, if possible, spare the darling child. O, Lord, if thou hast a work for her yet to do for thee in this life, raise her up to do it. If nothing farther, then take her to thyself, away from sin and sorrow and sickness forever. I leave all with thee. Thou canst do all things, canst raise up from the very grave, if that be best. O, give me strength and grace to trust thee fully, and unreservedly.

Thus, only far more fully, you wept, and cried, and prayed, and believed, as never before, till the peace of God, like a soft but sure rising tide, came stealing into your soul, deep, and strong, and still, till you were blessed away beyond all past experience. You were softened, mellowed and ripened richly. That was what you needed. That sickness was meant in mercy for you. You needed to be subdued, and your will given up to the Father's will. That made you "meet for the Master's use."

And from that moment your precious one began to amend. God has given you his lesson. Now he will try you again. Or, if the dear one now passes on from earth, you feel that your prayer is answered. You feel a resignation that is a life-blessing to you, and you feel tied to heaven with a cord tenfold beyond what you ever knew in the past. Sincerely now using the language of Rev. G. B. Peck you can say:

Whate'er my God ordains is right;
His will is ever just;
Howe'er he orders now my cause,
I will be still and trust.
He is my God,
Though dark my road;
He holds me that I shall not fall,
Therefore to him I leave it all.

These sailors must learn to yield their wills to God's will. See them. They did all they could,—struggled long, prayed to their gods, but the storm still raged; cast lots, but the sea foamed more and more; questioned Jonah and revered his answers, but the tempest increased; rowed hard to get to land, but the waves rolled with cumulative anger. They see all is no use. They give up. They break down. One can well imagine they wept and sobbed aloud, like children when overcome after a heart-breaking struggle.

But whether they literally wept or not, the text says, "They cried unto Jehovah." That was better than mere weeping. Yes, that was the best thing, the right thing, and the only thing for them to do then. After all their efforts,—their patience with the Lord's coward servant, their deliberation, their kindness, their study of the case, and their struggle to save the prophet,—it seems clear they must now yield to the inevitable. "Wherefore," that is, 'seeing the sea going and being tossed more and more,' "they cried unto Jehovah." Before this, they had prayed to their own gods. Now, they call upon the Lord, 'the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land,' and who, they were at last convinced, sent the storm.

They are changed men now. From Jonah, from the storm, and all that had just taken place, they had learned who the true, supreme God is, and they address him; address him in reverence, in submission, in earnestness, faith and hope. All these ingredients characterize their petition. "They cried unto the Lord, and said: "We beseech thee, O, Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O, Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." In these strong, yearning words, they plead for their own lives, and that they might not be held responsible for taking Jonah's. "Lay not upon us the guilt of having shed innocent blood; for thou, O, Lord, hast done as it pleased thee."

How sententious, how eloquent their exact words. "What thou"

willest, thou didst." There are just two words in the Hebrew,—“willest, didst.” The termination of each word shows the person meant,—the second person. “(thou) willest, (thou) didst.” True eloquence vigorously condensed! Read in Genesis one, three; “Light be, light was.” In Psalm thirty-three, nine; “He bid, it stood.” And here; “(thou) willest, (thou) didst.” It is all thy doing. We did not plan to take this man’s life. We have tried hard not to do it. We would fain avoid it. But thou hast shut us up to it. We are only carrying out thy declared will. Hold us not, therefore, responsible for this act. “That Jonah betook himself to this ship of ours, that the tempest was raised, that Jonah was taken by lot, that he passed this sentence upon himself,—all this comes of thy will,”—tersely writes Rosenmuller when paraphrasing their words. ♀

Notice, these now obedient mariners do not inquire into Jehovah’s motives, do not ask his reasons. His evident will is enough for them, as it is enough for any worshipper and servant of the Most High. Assured that it was the Lord who had sent his affliction, the Psalmist, when suffering it, in devout meditation, declares his resignation; “I am silenced; I will not open my mouth, because thou hast done it.”

In like manner convinced, and now also resigned to a painful duty, the seamen “took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea.” It does not read, ‘they laid hold on him,’ nor, ‘came upon him,’ intimating rough usage; but “lifted” him—“lifted up Jonah.” The true reading hints of tenderness, respect and reluctance, with no struggle on his part, or violence on theirs.

Overboard, and in such a storm as that, was certainly fearful. But Jonah submitted voluntarily. He offered no resistance. He gave himself up as a substitute for others. So did our Lord go into a fiercer storm. He went to his death of his own accord. He gave himself a free-will offering for sinners. “Like as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” Jonah was a type of Christ, not in that he was innocent, for he was guilty; but in that he gave himself a voluntary offering for the lives of others.

A type also in the result. As soon as they cast him forth, “the sea ceased from her raging.” “The sea stood to them,” it reads. The idea is, it stood like a servant after his work. At once the sailors had full calm and safety. Our Lord’s death on the cross immediately brought peace to a tempest-tossed world. Amid the storms of God’s righteous anger, there comes at once a great and permanent calm to

the soul that takes Christ as its Substitute, resting wholly on what he has done. Dear friend, accept the Saviour thus, and no storm of divine displeasure will ever overtake you.

But Jonah overboard—what became of him? We are not told just at once. The narrative stops a little to tell of the impression made on the minds of the mariners. "Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly." Back in the tenth verse the statement is: "Then were the men exceedingly afraid." Here it is, "They feared Jehovah exceedingly." There is a difference. "Then," at the opening of the storm their fear was vague and indefinite. They were terrified. Now the LORD is the direct object of their fear. They are awed into belief of his existence, as well as into reverence for his character.

To be afraid of God is not to fear him. To be afraid of God keeps men away from him. To fear God draws men to him. Proper fear includes reverence and love. He who fears God, in the true sense, has both awe of, and delight in, him. He fears to sin against him. Whoever fears God as a son, fears him also in act, and will strive not to transgress his holy law.

These mariners now "feared the Lord exceedingly." The sudden ceasing of the tempest and tranquility of the sea, had convinced them that Jonah's words about his God were true. They had never seen it on this fashion before. Generally the waves still swell after the wind has ceased. In this case, as soon as the sea received Jonah the storm hushed at once, to show that God alone had raised and also quelled it. The men are convinced. Their conversion is now completed. Incidents one after another, unfolding rapidly, had thronged upon them. Events full of wonder had made more and more impression on their minds. Things beyond nature, and contrary to nature as known to them, they had seen; all of them betokening the presence of the Almighty One, who has all things in his power; and all of them strongly corroborating and emphasizing the prophet's manly and frank avowal of the God of heaven who made all things. Being now believers, the men shew it by their worship. "They sacrificed a sacrifice unto the Lord, and vowed vows."

The connection suggests, they did it immediately. Some ancient ships were large enough to carry live animals, and it is not difficult to suppose that, bound on a long voyage as it was, this vessel had on board one or more beasts suitable for sacrifice, which the now devout crew offered at once, while they promised fuller services in the future. Their thankfulness was not all spent on one act of worship. "They

vowed vows"—promised that they would do hereafter what they could not, as fully as they wished, do then. Or, as Jerome thinks, they pledged themselves that they would never depart from him whom they had now begun to worship. Their promise stretched forward in purpose to an abiding and enlarged obedience in coming days, as God should give them grace and strength."

Doubtless these charitable, self-poised and considerate men were now enrolled among the people of God. First fruits they are from among the Gentiles. How strangely were they brought into the fold. The disobedience and repentance of the prophet, along with the storm and its marvellous subsidence, won them to the Lord God who rules over all.

Were these converted seamen the first preachers among the heathen? Did their account of their own wonderful deliverance prepare the way for Jonah's mission to Nineveh, as some suppose? Speculation here need not be indulged. Turn rather to what is practical and undoubted.

Has my reader begun to worship God in truth, and vowed vows for the future—for a life-long, unswerving service? Just here do duty and privilege lie. These heathen accepted Jehovah on evidence,—the unusual storm, the impotence of their own gods, the determination of the lot, Jonah's solemn words and confession, his sentence upon himself, its execution, the sudden, unheard of calm that at once came—all these things convinced them that Jehovah is THE God. And when convinced, they act accordingly. Every one in a christian land now has far fuller evidence of the existence, character and will of the great God over all, than these Tarshish-bound sailors had. Therefore, every one is bound to accept the evidence, act upon it, and at once and ever after engage in the true service of Jehovah of Hosts.

The earnest plea with every non-committed reader is, Oh, embrace Christ now, thus securing peace and a quiet soul, and begin sincere life-worship and service without delay. His holy word and his providence both call to this, and joy is ready to swell among the angels of God around the throne, as soon as each one, repentant, closes in with the Saviour. "Behold, now is the accepted time." Choose you to-day—"this very hour." May the prayer of Rev. Ray Palmer be the sincere cry of your heart:

Take me, O my Father, take me;
 Take me, save me, through thy Son;
That which thou wouldst have me, make me,
 Let thy will in me be done.
Long from thee my footsteps straying,
 Thorny proved the way I trod;
Weary come I now, and praying,
 Take me to thy love, my God. Amen.

Swallowed

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.
Jonah 1:17.

There is a power
Unseen, that rules the illimitable world;
That guides its motions, from the brightest star
To the least dust of this sin-tainted mould;
While man, who madly deems himself the lord
Of all, is naught but weakness and dependence.
—Thomson.

If mounted on a morning ray
I fly beyond the western sea,
Thy swifter hand would first arrive,
And there arrest thy fugitive.—Watts.

VII.

SWALLOWED

One would think that overboard in a storm like that would be the last of a man. So it would in all ordinary cases. It would certainly have been the last of Jonah had not God marvellously interposed. That is to say, it would have been the last of his earth-life. The soul is immortal and must go to God. Whether in sin or in salvation, prepared or unprepared, it must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Each one of us must give account of himself unto God; each one must live hereafter.

But limiting our thought in Jonah's case to life here below, overboard into the angry waters would have been his end, if the Lord had not provided remarkable means for his rescue.

We can never tell what God may do. He is perfectly infinite in resources. In working out his matchless plan, he often uses means amazingly unexpected to man. He can save by few or many, with means or without means. In his working, however, he generally condescends to use means; sometimes means the most marvellous, indeed. Jonah was cast forth into the sea, but "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow" him.

See how remarkably providences dove-tail into each other. The moment Jonah was lifted over the ship's side, and dropped into the water, the Lord had a sea-monster, of sufficient size and voracious disposition, just at that place ready to entomb him within itself.

All God's creatures are subservient to him. In ways that we cannot understand he often controls their wills, using them to do HIS will. He sent ravens to feed Elijah. He prompted wild bears to tear the mocking children of Bethel. He told the geese when to cackle to save Rome. And he brought a great fish to that bestormed ship just in the nick of time to take Jonah into its capacious maw.

But was Jonah swallowed as soon as he struck the waves? Some think he went to the bottom first. In the fifth and sixth verses of the next chapter, he says:

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul;
The deep was round about me;
The weeds were wrapped about my head.
I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;
The earth with its bars closed upon me forever;
Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O my God.

Taken literally these words are very forceful. "The waters come even to the soul"—pressing to penetrate at every opening—mouth, nose and ears—to fill the lungs, and destroy breathing. To draw breath which sustains life, would be to strangle life. Surely there is but a breath between him and death. The sea-weed was wrapped about his head as a grave band. To a strong swimmer on the surface, "the weeds" were often an entangling peril. To one below, powerless to struggle, they would be as a winding sheet. So the words intimate.

But Jonah may only be speaking figuratively. His strong imagination giving him the impression that the fish was carrying him through the waters, among the sea-weed, even deep down to the very "roots of the mountains," he used these metaphors to give strength to his thanksgiving for deliverance from immediate death. Although in great peril, he feels sure he was not being drowned. He had recovered his senses and composure enough to know that, in some unknown way, he was being preserved alive.

So he makes this a part of his prayer-song, conceived then and there, and written out afterwards. He says in substance: "In spite of the direst dangers—the waves, the waters, the sea-weed and the great depths—yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God." His body was saved. He was preserved from corruption, that is, from death and decay. Life was being prolonged. He felt that in some marvellous way the Lord was preserving him—perhaps for future service. Devout feelings fill his heart. He longs to worship in the sanctuary and pay his vows as he used to do, and so he declares in the latter part of his song.

In later years, looking back, he could aver with still stronger and more intelligent emphasis: "Thou hast brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God." A most wise and merciful Father, in a most wonderful way, did rescue his erring servant for very wonderful and far-reaching reasons. The Lord's "mighty acts" were manifest in every part of the transaction. In the particular exigency on the sea, at the very last extremity, God "prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."

Did the Lord create the fish then? Why ask it? The verse does not say so. It reads, "prepared a fish"—that is, appointed it—assigned it to this duty. The idea is, the Lord, in his overruling providence, so ordered that the animal was brought to the spot just at the precise time when Jonah was cast overboard, and its instrumentality would

be of use in his deliverance. The fact that the great fish was there just when needed, and was at once disposed to take him into its stomach, was as Henderson says, "the result of a special arrangement in the divine plan, according to which the movements of all creatures are regulated, and rendered subservient to the purposes of God's universal government."

The fact of Jonah's entombment in the whale is strongly verified in the New Testament. Matthew twelve, forty, shows that to two of the bantering sects of the Jews, our Lord spake positively of Jonah having been three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and affirms that this was a type of himself who was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

How high and far-seeing are all God's purposes! They, too, are all linked together—Jonah's entombment and Christ's—Jonah's deliverance and Christ's resurrection. Besides the disciplining of his wayward servant; the impression he intended to be made on the heathen mariners, and also on the heathen Ninevites; the Lord had a reason looking forward for hundreds of years, in having Jonah swallowed. He could as easily have kept him alive in the sea as in the fish's belly, but, in order to prefigure the burial of the Lord, he willed him to be within the fish whose belly was as the grave.

It surely becomes us to admire and adore the wonderful working of our God. "The high and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity" condescends to our low estate, goes after rebellious and careless wanderers to bring them back again into willing service; dwells with him that is of a lowly and a contrite heart, redeems our life from destruction, and heals all our backslidings for his own name's sake. O bless him ever, and forget not all his benefits.

But what fish was it swallowed the truant prophet? We do not know for certain. Infidels have denied that it was a whale. In fact they have denied the whole account, because, as they affirm, the whale, though often very large, has too small a throat to swallow a man. But the Bible does not say it was a whale. The exact term in the Old Testament is, "a great fish." And the Greek word our Saviour used does not primarily mean a whale, but a sea-monster,—any huge fish in general.

Smith's Bible Dictionary affirms, however, that "the sperm whale has a gullet sufficiently large to admit the body of a man." It may be argued also that if these whales are not now found in the Mediterranean, they may have been frightened out of it, in these modern days, by the

multiplication of ships, and may have been common there in Jonah's time, when "navigation was in its infancy, and ships were few and small, and kept mostly along the shores, leaving the interior undisturbed."

But the truth is, the common idea of Jonah's fish being a whale has no real warrant in Scripture at all. The Old Testament simply speaks of a great fish. And the New Testament employs a strictly equivalent term. Nor is it by any means important that we should know the exact species of fish employed by our Heavenly Father in doing his bidding at this time. Had it been important, the Bible would, no doubt, have designated definitely.

Still it may be interesting and also helpful to note some authentic instances of mammoth fish having swallowed men and other large animals entire. One remarkable instance is quoted by Doctor Pusey as follows: "A natural historian of repute relates, 'in 1758, in stormy weather, a sailor fell overboard from a frigate in the Mediterranean. A shark was close by, which, as he was swimming and crying for help, took him in its wide throat, so that he forthwith disappeared. Other sailors had leaped into the sloop to help their comrade, while yet swimming; the captain had a gun which stood on the deck discharged at the fish, which struck it so that it cast out the sailor whom it had in its throat, who was taken up alive and little injured, by the sloop which had come up. The fish was harpooned, taken up on the frigate and dried. The captain made a present of the fish to the sailor who, by God's providence, had been so wonderfully preserved. The sailor went round Europe exhibiting it. He came to Franconia, and it was publicly exhibited here in Erlangen, as also at Nernberg and other places. The dried fish was delineated. It was twenty feet long, and with expanded fins nine feet wide, and weighed 3924 pounds. From all this, says the historian, it is probable that this was the fish of Jonah.' "

Smith's Bible Dictionary also gives the outline of the same account, and adds other instances.

There is another fish, however, which, from its internal shape and build, some writers think was probably the receptacle of Jonah. Its Norwegian name is Rorqual, which means—whale with folds. The special characteristic of this whole class of sea-monsters is the possession of "a number of longitudinal folds, nearly parallel, which commence under the lower lip, occupying all the space between the two branches of the jaw, and pass down the throat" into the abdomen. The Ency-

clopedia Brittanica tells of an individual of this species 75 feet long, and having a mouth cavity of between 15 and 20 feet, that was stranded at St. Cyprian, Eastern Pyrenees in 1828. It has, therefore, been suggested that it was in the capacious folds of a Rorqual's mouth that Jonah was imbedded.

But the Bible don't say that Jonah was retained in the fish's mouth, but that he was swallowed. And the Rorqual, having a small throat, it is most unlikely that it was the fish of Jonah.

On the other hand, reliable writers tell us that in the Mediterranean have been found several kinds of fish so large that they can swallow a man whole, and so formed as to naturally swallow their prey whole. Of the white shark, they aver that, having teeth merely incisive, it has no choice, except between swallowing its prey whole, or cutting off a portion of it. And its voracity leads it to swallow at once all that it can.

A German naturalist of repute affirms: "The white shark is found of the size of 10,000 pounds, and horses have been found whole in its stomach." One of this sort was taken near Nice in the sixteenth century "approaching 4,000 pounds weight, in whose body was found a man whole."

A *Lamia* taken near Marseilles contained "a man in a coat of mail."

It is credibly attested that the white shark of North America attains "the length of 30 feet; that is, one-third larger than that which swallowed the sailor whole."

In 1802 Captain Brown attested that he "found the body of a woman entire, with the exception of the head, within the stomach of a shark killed by him at Surinam."

In all modern works on zoology we find 30 feet given as a common length for a shark's body. We are told also that its "body is usually only about eleven times the length of half of its lower jaw." So "a shark of 30 feet would have a lower jaw of nearly six feet in its semi-circular extent." And this jaw not being hard, stiff bone, but of a cartilaginous nature, giving the power of stretching and yielding easily, "enables us to understand how the shark can swallow animals as large, or larger than ourselves."

But there is evidence of still larger species formerly existing. Fossil teeth have been found in Malta and elsewhere, "some of which measure four and a half inches from the point to the base, and six inches from the point to the angle," proving, as scientists tell us, that

the fish to which they belonged, "must have much exceeded the present species in size." "The mouth of a fish of this sort is armed with 400 teeth of this kind." Both the quantity and size of these teeth still found "proves that these creatures existed formerly in great numbers, and that some were of extraordinary size." The throat for a mouth holding such a number of teeth must have been "at least eight or ten feet wide."

It is claimed that this fish is "found to this day of terrific size." "Celebrated for its voracity and courage, it is found in the Mediterranean and in almost every ocean. It generally keeps at the bottom, and rises only to satisfy its hunger. It is not seen near the shore, except when it pursues its prey, or is pursued by the mular, which it dreads. It swallows all sorts of aquatic animals, alive or dead, and pursues especially the sea-calf and the tunny. . . . attacks men wherever it can find them." So the Germans call it "menschenfresser"—men-eater.

One writer tells of a "sea-calf the size of an ox found in one of these" mammoth fish, "and in another, a reindeer with horns, which had fallen from a rock." It attains "a length of 25 or 30 feet." In one weighing 1500 pounds, taken near the island of St. Marguerite, was "found a horse quite whole, which had apparently been thrown overboard."

Another writer gives account of one taken near Marseilles "which was fifteen feet long;" and also tells of "two much larger" that were taken two years before "in one of which had been found two tunnies and a man quite dressed. The fish were injured, the man not at all."

"In 1760 there was exhibited at Berlin a requin stuffed, twenty feet long and nine feet in circumference where it was thickest. It had been taken in the Mediterranean. Its voracity is so great that it does not spare its own species."

A Laplander once took a requin and fastened it to his canoe, but soon missed it. After some time he took a larger one, and in its stomach found the one he had lost.

An Australian shark, which "measured thirty-seven feet after death" is certified to as having "teeth two and five-eighth inches long."

But we may well pause here for a little and ask, what shall we think of all these undoubted facts? Surely they ought to silence forever the objection of those who affirm it incredible that a fish swallowed Jonah. That these monsters of the Mediterranean have not only

swallowed men whole, but even larger animals than men, is a thing that has been incontestably proven beyond all dispute.

Therefore, cavils and doubts at this point should evermore cease. The Lord "prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah," and the fish did the thing the Lord had set for it to do. Overboard went the prophet into the sea. Glad for such a morsel, wide opened the fish its great mouth and at one gulp took him whole inside itself. He had tried to get away—tried to flee "from the presence of the Lord." He had taken things in his own hands; had refused obedience; but was not long in finding out that God is the same in every place; that disobedience displeases him every where; and that neither prophet, nor any one else, can escape God-given duty by hastening outside certain territorial limits, or home surroundings.

On this point, surely the right thought is: all soil is sacred. That is, the obligation of sincere and willing service to our Heavenly Father is certainly due from us wherever we go. Let no one, then, think he can lay aside christian responsibility when he goes visiting, or camping, or traveling, or when work takes him among religiously careless or godless people.

"God is every where," answer young children from their catechism. And next they respond: "I cannot see him, but he always sees me." Then they add: "Nothing can be hid from God." This is undoubtedly the teaching of the sacred writer in the Psalm when he declares:

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there;
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me,
Then the night shall be light about me.

No, we cannot escape God. If we try to flee to some Tarshish, the Lord will soon show us he is in every place. If we run away from duty in any direction, his presence is ever about us. He is near for our good, may be for our discipline, but undoubtedly for our good. And this blessed fact we will some day surely see and know. May Riley Smith has well written:

Some time, when all life's lessons have been learned,
And sun and stars for evermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash upon us out of life's dark night
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue,
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.

Yes, our Father knows the very best manner of dealing with wayward children. In his own "high and lofty" way he often disciplines them in love, when they and others deem the chastening a reproof and a judgment.

But another lesson. He who is the Ruler over all has limitless resources. By countless methods he can arrest runaways from duty and bring them back. Speaking out of the burning bush in the Midian desert he called into active service Moses the meek, who had been in timid hiding there for forty years. By his angel he brought down-hearted Elijah back from under the juniper tree in the depth of the wilderness into bold and fearless work for him again in Israel. By means of a vision in the night he called Paul and Silas over into Macedonia when they were trying to go elsewhere. By a dream about the most rich and beautiful crown in all the crown-room of heaven being lost to him because of his truancy from the sacred office of the ministry, he led Cortlandt Van Rensselaer to abandon the study of the law on which his heart was set, and to enter with his whole soul on the work of preaching the gospel of Him who had saved him. By untold ways in numberless cases has God turned wanderers back to himself. Often by the "still, small voice" heard only in our own hearts, does he come and "sweetly force" us into his way, which is always the better way; while sometimes he "mounts the storm and rides upon the wind," as in Jonah's case, to do the same thing.

Under him our duty and our privilege are always the same. Hear his voice and heed it. Follow his leading. Abide where he puts us. Go where he sends us. Work while the day lasts. Take courage of heart from his own call, and promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Faithfulness would have brought blessing to Jonah. It will bring it to us. Truly with Watts we ought to be able most devoutly to say:

O bless our God, and never cease;
 Ye saints, fulfil his praise;
 He keeps our life, maintains our peace,
 And guides our doubtful ways.

* * * * *

Through watery deeps and fiery ways
 We march at his command,
 Led to possess the promised place
 By his unerring hand.

May our wonder working God, in his mercy and love, make us
 and all his people faithful and steadfast unto the end. Amen.

Unharmmed

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.
—Jonah 1:17.

“I regard a miracle,” said uncle, “to be merely such an interference wi’ the established coorse o’ things as infallibly shows us the presence and the action o’ a supernatural power. . . . My time is too fast, and I may hae a special reason noo for settin’ my watch wi’ the railway; and, so, see ye, I’m turnin’ the hauns o’t aroun’ backwards. Noo, wad ye say that I hae violated the laws o’ a watch? True, I hae dune what watchdom, wi’a’ its laws, coodna hae dune for itself; but I hae dune violence to nane o’ its laws. My action is only the interference o’ a superior intelligence for a suitable end; but I hae suspended nae law, violated nae law. Weel, then, instead o’ the watch, say the universe, instead o’ movin’ the hauns, say God acting worthily o’ himself; and we hae a’ that I contend for in a miracle; that is, the unquestionable presence o’ an Almighty haun workin’ the divine will.”

VIII.

UNHARMED

Alive, in such a place, for so long a time, and no harm come to him! Able to breathe and live and think and pray, quote Scripture and worship God; doubtless to repent, resolve, promise obedience, and plan better service in the future,—it all seems amazing; far out of the ordinary, indeed. Such a marvel never happened before or since.

What shall we call it? A miracle? Such it was beyond all doubt. Yes, the keeping of Jonah alive and unharmed, for so long a time, in such a place, was surely very high above the common and the usual. This is freely admitted; even earnestly claimed.

That a human subject, who had been accustomed for years to breathe the vital air, could exist without respiration, or upon the foul air in a fish's stomach, for the length of time here specified, without miraculous interposition, has never been proven. Abenezra, a scholarly Hebrew of an early day, as quoted by Henderson, takes the only position that can be consistently maintained when he affirms: "No man has the power of living in the bowels of a fish for a single hour; how much less for such a number of hours, except by the operation of a miracle."

Nor other than this is the clear teaching of our Lord, as a study of Matthew 12:39 will show. The Scribes and Pharisees, in an unbelieving, contentious spirit, had asked for a "sign." They use the very word that in Luke 23:8, John 2:11, and other places, is translated miracle. The term may be so rendered here. They asked that Jesus should work a miracle to gratify their curiosity. They wanted something like what was given Moses on Sinai, or in the desert. Wanted thunder, lightning, a comet, the manna, or the sun to stand still as in Joshua's day,—some miracle from heaven," they require.

But Jesus answered: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a miracle, and there shall no miracle be given it, but the miracle of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Our Lord's words on this occasion are a proof that Jonah's preservation was a miracle.

But in what did the miracle consist? Surely, not in the sudden, violent and extraordinary storm; nor in the fact that the fish was at the place just in the nick of time; nor yet in the fact that it at once

gulped Jonah down whole and unharmed. These things may be called unusual, even marvellous. No one of them was necessarily miraculous. It was easy for God to bring them about in the ordinary working of his mighty overrulings.

But that Jonah was able to breathe and live, for so long a time, in the foul air of the monster's stomach, this, being ABOVE the ordinary, as we see it, is what is called miraculous.

And why is this name used? What does it mean?

Surely, not that it "is against, or contrary to, the laws of nature," as a miracle has sometimes been defined. We do not affirm this at all. What we understand to be the true idea may be stated thus: Any event, such as the preservation of Jonah, which, in our estimation, is different from, and higher than, the ordinary workings of the Almighty Ruler, and thus appears to us to be extraordinary—such event, or transaction, we call a miracle.

But the thing to be observed now is: these higher workings are no less according to the course of the divine will than what we are pleased to term the ordinary mode of his procedure. To Omnipotence there is no greater or less. The creation of the universe, of the starry heavens, or of a fly, are alike to him,—simple acts of the divine will. In each case, he spake and it was done. As one has well said: "What to men seem the greatest miracles, or the least, are all alike to him—the mere 'Let it be' of his all holy will, acting in a different way for one and the same end,"—that end being the exhibition and proof of his power and presence and interest condescendingly exhibited for the discipline, instruction and guidance of his intelligent creatures, who ought to serve him of free choice.

"How long," exclaims the same writer, "will men think of God as if he were man; of the Creator as if he were a creature; as though the creation were but one piece of machinery which is to go on ringing its regular changes until it shall be worn out, and God were shut up, as a sort of main-spring within it, who might be allowed to be primal Force, to set it in motion, but must not be allowed to vary what he has once made?" "Poor hood-winked souls, who would extinguish for themselves the Light of the world, in order that it may not eclipse the rushlight of their own theory."

Man's theory is often far below God's will and wisdom and power as shown in his word and in his works. It was just as easy for Omnipotence to keep Jonah alive three days and three nights in the fetid air of his submerged tomb, as to enable him, or us, to breathe

the pure air of heaven for a life time. God's workings in what we call nature, and his workings above what we call nature, form one harmonious whole. Each was determined by him from the beginning.

What we have been calling interruptions of the law of nature, are as much a part of the Father's eternal plan as what has seemed to us ordinary occurrences. They are not disturbances of his laws, but a part of their predetermined outworking. Before the universe was made he had willed to do them, as the Scriptures declare: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of eternity."

Our short sightedness leaves us to low conceptions. We think of nature being what is seen in our Father's ordinary workings. Whereas, nature is what at any time, and for any purpose, seemeth good to him who doeth all things well. Hence all his works, those which to us seem ordinary, and those which seem extraordinary,—all, in their several times and circumstances subserve the same end, which is to magnify the manifold wisdom of God.

Carlyle says; "When I drive along the turnpike, come to the toll gate, and putting a penny in the slot, the gate swings back on its hinges, its opening is a miracle to my horse, but not to me, for I understand the mechanical device that accomplishes the fact. Just so, in a higher realm, what seems miracle to us is no miracle to God, but simply the ordinary working out of the laws he at first ordained, and ever keeps in operation."

"A story is told of a clock in a cathedral tower so constructed that it strikes the century as it ordinarily strikes the hours. At midnight, when a century closes a little wheel turns, a pin slides into the appointed place, and the bell that tolled twice a day from one to twelve, now tolls a hundred times, sounding the requiem of the expiring year. That clock, for a century, had only marked the hours. No living man had heard it strike more than twelve. This seemed to be the normal law of its being. But it was originally constructed, not to violate that law, but to add to it a wondrous thing once in a hundred years. When the ignorant masses heard that prolonged tolling at midnight, no doubt they cried, "a miracle," But for that tolling the machinery had been arranged long years before. And thus, events which occur so rarely in what we call the operations of nature that we regard them as miraculous, were all provided for by God when he made the world."

This story teaches us how to interpret the rescue of Jonah, and also how to view every other marvellous work the Lord has done at different times. Each was a part of his eternal plan, and came in just when he had before determined that it should.

Nor will we stagger at one miracle more than at another. We will not hesitate to believe this high working of the Almighty and All Wise Creator in Jonah's case any more than any other told us in the sacred records.

Some receive other miracles, but reject this. But was Jonah's preservation within the mammoth fish any greater work of God than was the preservation of the Hebrew youth in the burning fiery furnace? any greater than the sending of fire from heaven to burn Elijah's drenched sacrifice? Some will cavil at Jonah's being brought forth alive after three days remarkable entombment, who stagger not either at the raising of Lazarus after he had been actually DEAD in the grave FOUR days, or at the resurrection of Christ by the Spirit of God after he had slept in death three days and three nights in Joseph's tomb.

But wherein is the consistency of such a position? The argument of any objector against a miracle in Jonah's case, lies equally against every other of which account is given in the Bible. So that he who denies a miracle in this instance, must, to be consistent, deny all miracles; and then we would lack one of the very highest proofs that God ever inspired and sent chosen servants to make his will known to the human race.

No, we must admit miracles, or what we are accustomed to call miracles. Undoubtedly they took place just as the record in each case says. Indisputably, too, it is just as easy for the omnipotent God to work in these extraordinary ways, as in those we observe as his ordinary and regular methods. So, we will not stumble at any thing the almighty Father ever did to impress men's minds, and to convince that he is the ever living, all powerful Jehovah who demands obedience, and who has a right to receive it, from every creature.

But pass on now to notice some of the lofty and far-reaching reasons why this miracle in Jonah's case was wrought.

A high purpose, of course, centred in Jonah himself. It was meant to affect him. It was intended to discipline him into submission, and bring him to a suitable awe of God, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth.

One thing, he must learn that he cannot escape God. He recklessly tried it. He fled the land, but got in peril on the sea. The tempest overtook him, the lot accused him, the sea received him, the fish enclosed him, and, because he had set himself against obeying his Maker, he was carried, a culprit, by his great prison house back towards the place where he had been sent, and where he was unwilling to go.

God did not lead Jonah at once straight from the vessel to his mission field—that great city—“but the sailors gave him over to the sea, the sea to the vast fish, the fish to God, God to the Ninevites, and thus, through this long circuit, brought back his fugitive.” In this wonderful way Jonah was taught, and we are all taught, that it is impossible to escape the presence and power of him with whom we have to do.

But the rebellious prophet must also learn obedience. “The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” How he spake to the fish we know not, nor need we speculate. When he is described in the Bible as commanding the irrational animals, or the elements, or any part of the creation, the meaning is that he is controlling them according to the good pleasure of his will. Thus dragons and all deeps and stormy wind are said to fulfil his word.

Irrational creatures have wills of their own. But God somehow controls them when he chooses. He had commanded his servant Jonah, and he disobeyed. In some way he commanded the fish, he laid his will upon it, and it forthwith obeyed. This was a pattern to the rebellious prophet after his release. He might thus learn to implicitly obey his Maker, Ruler and Friend.

But again, Jonah should learn to be mild and charitable. The crew of that vessel unwittingly took the runaway aboard. And, when shut up to it, they very reluctantly and tenderly cast him over into the sea. “The waves received him and choked him not, the vast fish swallowed him and destroyed him not, but both the huge monster and the elements gave back their deposit safe to God.” By all these things the prophet should learn to be mild and tender, not more cruel than the untaught mariners, or the wild waves, or the dumb animals.

Jonah had duties to the Ninevites. He ought to think of, and work for, them with interest and good will. They needed saving, and he, a saved man, should long for their rescue. This would bless both him and them. Kindliness in his heart would help gain him access to theirs, and also rebound blessedly upon himself.

The rule is universal. Every man owes good wishes to every other. The inspired word requires this, especially of christians. Meekness, gentleness, goodness, charity, are qualities all should earnestly covet and cultivate, for these are precious graces of the Holy Spirit; are commanded in strong terms in the Bible; and are taught us, in many ways, in the great book of nature. Therefore, beloved, “be pitiful, be courteous.” “Put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humble-

ness of mind, meekness, long suffering," remembering also that other precious word of our Lord which assures, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

But besides these lessons to Jonah himself, the miracle in his case, consisting in his marvellous preservation and escape, was meant to be an impressive lesson to both the Ninevites and the Israelites. The prophet's condition under punishment, shut up as he was from the outer world, was intended to be, as much as possible, the emblem of death. Thus he was a present type, both to the people of Nineveh and Israel, of the death of sin.

Moreover, his deliverance from his entombment was a type to them of the spiritual resurrection which immediately follows repentance. Jonah was delivered as soon as he repented and raised his prayer of thanksgiving. So a sinner repents, accepts Christ, and at once is born from the dead. He has a new nature begotten within him just then. By the power of the Holy Ghost he is raised out of the death of sin into the life of Christ. The life and the love of Christ are now begun in his soul.

Speaking of this work, this experience, the Apostle describes it as "risen with Christ." Christ is the figure to us; Jonah was to the people of Israel and Nineveh. They needed raising to new life in God, should seek it, and might obtain it, as Jonah out of his living tomb was brought forth alive to breathe the blessed air of heaven.

Another thing: This experience of the prophet wherein the devourer became his preserver, strikingly prefigured the infinite resources of God in mercy as well as in judgment. How plain is the lesson here, that God will never run short of means in any moment of extremity. The universe is at his bidding, and he can pick up just what he wants and where he wants it. Limitless in power and mercy must he be, or he could not have struck out such a way to save Jonah in that thrilling exigency. Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide—is his name. At his will the nearest thicket on mount Moriah, in the very crisis of need, supplied a ram as a substitute for the offering of Isaac.

And just so was it, too, with device for the soul's rescue. When no mortal could find a ransom; nor any sinner answer for one of a thousand of his sins, then God laid help upon "One who is Mighty." He brought deliverance out of the very jaws of apparent defeat and ruin. In infinite wisdom he devised a plan by which man, a sinner, shut out by justice from mercy, could yet be saved in perfect consistency with both mercy and judgment.

“Deep in unfathomable minds
Of never failing skill;
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.”

Yes, yes, our God is absolutely unhampered and boundless in his mighty resources.

Then, a still farther design was to make Jonah's three days and nights imprisonment, and deliverance afterward, a future type of Jesus' literal death for sin and his resurrection by the spirit of God.

This is one of the things in which Jonah and Christ were alike. Both were victims to death for God's anger against sin—Jonah for his own, Christ for his people's sins laid on him to bear. Jonah was miraculously rescued from threatened death. Christ was miraculously raised from real death. The Jews looked for a Messiah gloriously coming in the clouds of heaven. That Messiah came in a deeper humiliation than that of Jonah. Jonah lay alive in the bosom of the fish. Christ slept in death “in the heart of the earth.” “The sign of the prophet Jonas” means the evidence that was given to the people of Nineveh that Jonah was from God. His preservation and deliverance from his living tomb proved it. So Jesus' miraculous preservation and resurrection from actual death proved, beyond all cavil and doubt, he was from the Supreme Ruler and Lord.

But again, Jonah's entombment and rescue gave weight to his message to that heathen people. So Christ's death and resurrection are the only foundation for repentance. Sincere sorrow for sin derives all its efficacy from what Christ has done in giving his life and taking it again. Yea, “he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.” God's mercy in restoring guilty Jonah gave the Ninevites hope of mercy. Our Lord's resurrection assures all sinners that God is now fully reconciled to man,—reconciled by Christ's death as man's Sin offering and Substitute.

Of all these various purposes of the miracle, this last is the most practical one for us. Christ risen is our hope. “He bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” He expired and lay in the tomb for our iniquity. He rose again for our justification. He is our Daysman and Mediator between God and us. Knowing this from Bible teaching, Bernard, in the eleventh century, furnished a fitting heart cry for each of us when he wrote:

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinners' gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Saviour!
'Tis I deserve thy place;
Look on me with thy favor,
Vouchsafe to me thy grace.

Well for us if we each have our souls ever so attuned to the sweet words of Miss Havergal that we can, in truth, make them our own, and often use them:

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
Trusting only Thee;
Trusting Thee for full salvation,
Great and free.
I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
Never let me fall;
I am trusting Thee for ever,
And for all.

Praying

And Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly.
Jonah 2:1.

The general conception of prayer is too narrow. Many Christian people almost limit the idea of prayer to petition. To them the essence of prayer is the asking of God for things agreeable to his will. But so to think of prayer is utterly to misunderstand it. True prayer does not consist only, or even mainly, of petition. At its best, prayer is the expression of the soul's fullness as much as of its want. It is the out-pouring of the heart to God. Prayer, in short, is fellowship. No narrower conception of it will suffice.

—Rev. G. H. C. Macgregor.

IX.

PRAYING.

This is the one thing we are told about Jonah when shut up in his sea-monster tomb. He called upon God. What else he thought and did is not stated.

It seems legitimate, however, to surmise that his mind was very busy. No doubt he meditated much. His feelings, too, would surely go through a most agitated revulsion.

In that narrow home where, by miracle, he was not consumed, but breathed and retained his senses, he, most likely, repented much that he had ever offended his Master; marvelled at the Lord's wonderful way of dealing with him; adored the divine Majesty with wonderful awe for his judgments; and promised and pledged future obedience.

But of all that he thought, felt, experienced and purposed during his three days and three nights of darkness, we are not informed. Just one thing is singled out and told us. Jonah prayed. He "prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Besides thinking and repenting this was about the only thing he could do, as it was the most sensible thing. If the Lord did not hear and send help, there was no hope for him.

His lofty, splendid hymn, called a prayer, is recorded in the second chapter of his book.

The first thing to note about it is its orderly arrangement. It falls naturally into three parts, or divisions. In each part the two elements of danger and deliverance, of need and help, appear. But these elements enter into the successive divisions in very different proportions. Faith grows, and the prospect brightens, at each fresh stage of the hymn.

The first part rises to prayer, the second to confidence, the third to thankfulness and praise.

The first division is made up of the second, third and fourth verses; the second division embraces the fifth and sixth verses; while the third division includes the seventh, eighth and ninth verses.

In the first division there are three things. The second verse is an introduction, containing the general subject of the hymn: I cried and was heard, I was in trouble and was delivered. The third verse gives a description of the danger and distress; cast into the deep, surrounded by floods, overwhelmed by billows and waves. The fourth

verse shows faith triumphing over despondency and prompting to prayer; though cast out of thy sight, I will look toward thy holy temple.

In the second division there is first, a still more vivid description of the danger and distress; the waters surrounded me so as to endanger my soul, or life; the depth shut me in; the weeds entangled me; I went down to the very bottom; the gates of the earth were barred and made fast upon me. Then, second, the last part of the sixth verse declares deliverance not only prayed for, but possessed. "thou HAST brought up my life from corruption." Here is assurance.

Passing to the third division, note again three things. First, in the seventh verse a declaration that "prayer, offered in danger and distress, has been heard." Second, the eighth and part of the ninth verse promise that the deliverance which God has granted "shall be acknowledged with sacrifices of thanksgiving and vows joyfully paid." Then, the last part of the ninth verse affirms that all salvation is of God, just as this representative instance shows.

Surely, Jonah must have been under the direct and sure guidance of the unerring Spirit of the living God, to become the author of such a systematic, logically arranged, and lofty composition at such a time and in such a place. We may well study it.

In doing so note next, the character of his prayer.

It is really a thanksgiving. Just as in first Samuel 2:1-10 we are told that Hannah prayed; yet there is not a word of petition in all her utterance. Paul and Silas, imprisoned in the Phillippian jail "prayed and sang praises," we read. But Alford translates: "praying, sung praises," or "in their prayers were singing praises."

And what does this variety of reading teach us? Clearly that the ESSENCE of true devotion is the great thing. This is of much more moment than the sharp distinction which, in modern times, we are accustomed to make between prayer and praise. This distinction is not marked in Bible times, as Hannah's prayer and others show. Read carefully, also, Jonah's words, as here recorded, and find description of his danger, expression of his faith, a declaration of vows made, and promise to fulfill them with thanksgiving, but no direct plea or petition. He speaks of prayer, it is true, but always in the past tense. He reverently says: "I cried unto the Lord." "He heard me." "Thou hast brought up my life from destruction." "My prayer came in unto thee."

How shall we interpret and understand? The simplest way is to suppose, with many Bible scholars, "that Jonah had prayed to God

in the prospect and in the act of being cast into the sea; while he was being buffeted by the waves, and sinking into the depths; and in the agony of being swallowed by the fish. During all this time, whether his lips spake or not, his mind was fixed in that intent, Godward attitude and posture, which is the truest prayer. Now, however, when he finds himself alive and unharmed in that strange abode, he prays no longer, but offers thanksgiving for the measure of deliverance already granted him in answer to those former prayers," and mingles these "with joyful anticipations of the yet further deliverance which the last verse of the chapter records."

Taking this view, which commends itself as the most natural, it seems probable that Jonah's hymn of devotion and worship "was offered at the end of the three days and nights, and was followed immediately by his release."

But mark also: Jonah recognized the only Source of help. "He prayed unto the Lord his God." Yes, though he had tried to run away from "the presence of the Lord," yet Jehovah was his God still. His God when he was in rebellion as much as he was before and after.

This case of Jonah was very much like that of the prodigal son. Though that son had unthankfully left home, and lost, for a time, filial affection, yet the parental relation had not changed. The heart-broken man who had been his father before his scape-grace conduct, was his father still, with pity and longing in his heart, and readiness to receive the wanderer the moment he came back penitent. Away off there in a far country in a sad plight he did not acknowledge his father. But, as soon as he came to himself, he did. "I will arise and go to my father" was then his vow. This he did at once, and as soon as home his very first word was, "father."

The sinner, the unconverted, impenitent one, does not trustingly, lovingly and often say, "My Father in heaven." But as soon as he comes to himself, he then cries out, "My Lord and My God." Jonah, truant for a time but now penitent, knows that the Lord is his God still, and he now acknowledges this by calling on him in prayer.

And this word—penitent—suggests another characteristic of true prayer. It is a sign of a change of heart. It was a sign in Jonah's case, in the prodigal's, in Paul's. "Behold he prayeth," was the declaration of the Lord himself, made to Ananias, as a proof that Saul of Tarsus was a changed man—that he was now a christian. His bitter opposition to God's way of salvation through Jesus the Lord had melted away, and now, penitent, he was praying. His praying proved

his penitence. So Jonah's. His rebellion and stubbornness are now gone. Again he is on loving terms with his heavenly Father, and calls upon him as a trusting child.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air."

Whoever truly and enjoyably breathes out prayer to Christ has the life of Christ in his soul.

Oh, well, would it be if every wanderer in heart would heed the plea of Gregory, one of the early christian fathers, when he exhorts: "Let the sinner, too," as well as Jonah, "cry aloud, whom, departing from God, the storm of desires overwhelmed, the malignant enemy devoured, the waves of this present world sucked under. Let him own that he is in the depth, that so his prayer may reach to God." The blessing of heaven will always follow sincere prayer:

"Lord, incline me to repent,
Help me now my fall lament;
Deeply my revolt deplore:
Weep, believe, and sin no more."

After any and every spell of rebellion and waywardness, each one ought to return unto the Lord his God with sincere sorrow of heart. God is ever right, never wrong. Whenever there is wrong it is in us, not in him. Our wisdom, duty and privilege are to act on the earnest plea of inspiration: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord who will have mercy upon him, and unto our God who will abundantly pardon."

But another thing: Jonah's experience hints also that true prayer is ever sincere. It is the real cry of the heart unto God. The voice may be used, but it is the HEART that prays.

Tertullian and Augustine have each put the thought quaintly. The former says: "Not of the voice but of the heart is God the hearer, as he is the seer. Do the ears of God wait for sound? How then could the prayer of Jonah, from the inmost belly of the fish, through the bowels of so great a creature, out of the very bottomless depths, through so great a mass of waters, make its way to heaven?" The words of the latter are: "Loud crying to God is not with the voice, but with the heart. Many, silent with their lips, have cried aloud with their heart; many, noisy with their lips, could, with heart turned

away, obtain nothing. If then thou criest, cry WITHIN where God heareth."

These quotations go to the root of the matter. True prayer is the inner and deep longing of the soul directed to Him who helpeth from on high.

Of course the use of the voice is not forbidden, and is not a detriment. We are so constituted that it usually is a help to us. It intensifies our heart cry—gives vent to it. The Psalmist declares: "I cried unto God with my voice,—and he gave ear unto me." The meaning is, he gave vocal expression to his heart plea, and that heart plea was heard and graciously answered.

So we are encouraged to SPEAK OUT our petitions to the Lord. But if voice is gone, or there is not strength to use it, our plea may reach the mercy seat without vocalization.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
UTTERED, or UNEXPRESSED;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast."

The great lesson for each one to learn on this point is, that true worshipers are those who "worship the Father in spirit and in truth," and that such are they whom the Father "seeketh to worship him." Lack of sincere HEART service is mockery, and unacceptable to the hearer of prayer, who is a spirit, and who only lends ear to Spirit-begotten longings and cries of the heart.

But this subject also suggests a thought about the PLACE of prayer. Any place may be an oratory. Imprisoned within a great fish, and carried to the depth of the sea, Jonah sought unto God. A field, garden or mountain; a cellar, garret or haymow; may be a closet for prayer. Communion of soul may be held with the Lord on the busy street, in the crowded store, in company or solitude, in lying down or rising up, on the porch or at the plow. Once a godly minister on horse back, thinking he was all alone, was praying aloud as he rode along, when a young man in the thick underbrush at the road side, overhearing, was deeply and lastingly impressed by the words of petition so unexpectedly wafted to his ears. That was a good spot for a minister's devotion. No place is amiss for heart cries to heaven.

But though this is true, every one will find it a great help to have a special place regularly visited. There we soon learn to feel at home, and so experience less distraction. This is according to the law of

mind. Men do better work at manual labor, better work as students and accountants, when they have become wedded to places. So there was some philosophy in the remark of the new boy at school when he said: "I missed the right answer because I hadn't yet got the hang of the school-house." He needed to get accustomed to his surroundings, and to feel at home.

A christian lady, boarding at a hotel, once astonished her pastor by saying her closet of prayer was the drawing room where balls and parties were held nearly every night. But he soon thought approvingly when she went on to explain that neither morning, noon or night could she be alone in her own room, but by rising an hour earlier every morning, she found the drawing room the quietest place in all the building. And there she had her daily season of meditation and prayer. Rejoiced was the pastor at the determination of a christian woman to be alone at some time, and in some place, each day with her God.

The call to each one of us is: "Enter thou into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door," so as to be free from interruption, and free from all fear of interruption, "pray." There must be a stated time and a special place, or this duty will be elbowed along out of the way of other duties during the day, and, after while, elbowed clear out of use. We would well remember that as long as we are in this world good habits are a great help to us. The habit of going regularly to the mercy seat is of priceless value. Then, as "we won't give up the Bible," so neither let us ever give up our regular seasons of approach to God, nor, by any means, omit our frequent ejaculatory prayers at irregular times and places.

The recreant prophet's experience suggests there are some special times for earnest soul-crying unto God. His was prompted by his trial—his sudden, great, unexpected and unheard of trial. The terror of his situation made it seem to him as the depth of the grave. His poetic phrase is, "The belly of hell." And his more literal terms, as he was unwillingly carried in utter darkness a living captive, away under the sea, were, "All thy waves and thy billows go over me." "The waters compass me about, even to the soul; the depth closes me round about, the weeds are wrapped around my head."

In a sad case he was, truly. There was no help in self. The only One who can now bring deliverance is he who alone controls and governs "all his creatures and all their actions." So a living prisoner in a living prison, he cried unto the Lord his God in his affliction.

And this is the lesson for us. When in any trial, it is a blessed privilege to call upon our sympathizing Lord. At our stated times and places, or in any place, at any hour or moment, we may seek divine help in trouble. In fact this is one of the very blessings and purposes of trouble. A kind and wise Heavenly Father permits it to come upon us for our good. The Psalmist says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."

This is no strange or uncommon experience. There are many in our day, as well as in David's, who can truly say it was their sinking in the horrible pit and the miry clay that prompted their pleading cry to heaven—a cry that became availing. In their extremity they called upon the Lord and he inclined unto them, brought them up out of the mire and the pit, established their goings, set their feet on a rock, and put a new song in their mouth, even that of praise unto their God. Once they sang dolefully, but now thankfully, joyously. Blessed is he who has learned the long-ago most surely established path from disappointment and affliction to the altar of prayer. There is such a path.

"From every stormy wind that blows,
From every, swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat,
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat."

The Roman Centurian learned that path, the Syro-Phoenician woman, too, when affliction in servant and daughter prompted their earnest petitions to the Lord, the Son of David. And thousands upon thousands of others have learned the same lesson since. Let us not forget that all our trials and afflictions, great or small, protracted or brief, should teach us to seek help from Him whose help is ever a benediction, never a hurt.

Scriptural

All thy billows and thy waves passed over me. . . . Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O, Lord, my God.—Jonah 2:3, 6.

Christ loves us a great deal too well to give our own foolish and selfish wills the keys of his treasure-house. The condition of our getting what we will is our willing what he desires; and unless our prayers are a great deal more the utterances of the submission of our wills to his than they are the attempt to impose ours upon him, they will not be answered. We get our wishes when our wishes are moulded by his Word.—Dr. A. MacLaren.

SCRIPTURAL

Enlightened prayer uses Scripture. Jonah packed his full of Bible thoughts. Within the compass of eight short verses he makes nine quotations from the word of God, all of them from the Psalms. The Lord allows us to do this. He is pleased when we plead his own promises and invitations. He smiles graciously when adoringly we use the lofty terms he himself has given us in his own word.

Our prayers would be enriched very much if we would study and commit and employ more scripture in them. Of course, not just for the purpose of quoting Scripture, but for the purpose of making the passages quoted the real expression of our wants, our desires, our thanksgiving and our adoration.

Some have not studied the word of the Lord much yet, and so have but few verses in mind. But who cannot cry out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Or who cannot plead. "Create in me a clean heart?" or call in earnestness, "Lord, save, I perish?"

Each of these expressions is a Scripture exactly suited to the wants of every sincere seeker at the throne of grace.

Or, without exact quotation, the petitioner may incorporate Scripture expressions and Scripture thoughts into his own sentences. In a number of verses Jonah did this. As encouraging him to call on God, he quoted: "I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me," meaning, I formerly prayed and got answer, so I now have hope in God and believe he will hear me again. As an expression of his need of divine help he borrowed from one place the thought: "All thy billows and thy waves have gone over me," and from another: "The waters compassed me about." In the fourth verse, instead of using the simple, prose, trite and common expression, "I pray," he adopted Scripture phraseology, and employed the more lofty and enriched sentence: "I look again toward thy holy temple." This is one characteristic of his prayer all the way through, and a beautiful one.

But after all, of course,¹ the great thing is to utter the real cry of the heart unto God,—to "offer up" our sincere desires to him. We need not run after Scripture, nor strain after it, when on our knees, but the thought is: the more familiar we are with the very language of God's word, the more frequently, when at prayer, will we find its inspired phraseology presenting itself to our minds as the very best expression of our own real need; penitence, gratitude and adoration.

But what else do we learn from Jonah?

One thing: to have hope. Whoever, apparently, was more shut out from hope than he? Yet hear him encourage his faith thus "Thou hast brought up,"—meaning in former experience,—“Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.” “When my soul fainted within me, I remember thee, Lord, and my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.” He is arguing reverently with the Lord, as the intensely exercised soul is allowed to do, and has at least some hope that the Lord will hear and help, as he had often done on former occasions.

It is a question whether any prayer would ever be offered up, if the offerer of it had no hope at all of answer. The Psalmist David was once almost utterly despondent. Absalom had rebelled, Joab his chief general was a traitor. David himself was an exile from his capital, surrounded by insulting foes. The darkness on his soul was so oppressive that his piteous cry was: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God.” This cry he repeated over and over again. We have it at least three times in the Psalm, and he may have used it oftener. Its repetition helped him; for soon, it would seem right at once, hope sprang up in his heart, and he emphatically assured his halting faith with the words: “For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

This was but an isolated and uncommon experience of that man of God. Usually, hope was in the ascendant. Hear him at another time: “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.” No doubt, no hesitation, full of faith and trust,—this is the lesson for us. We cannot keep ourselves through the night; cannot ward off robber, cyclone or sickness. So we commit ourselves to our Heavenly Father in quiet trust. “He giveth his beloved sleep,” while he watches over each one as a mother over her slumbering babe in its crib by her couch. “I will lay me down in peace.”—no over anxiety, no tossing distraction—“and sleep”—not stay awake in worry and solicitude. I do not need to. The Lord maketh me dwell in safety. And he is the only one who can do it, and does it. Three-hundred and sixty-five times last year he did it, and about as many times each year I have lived. I have sweet hope in him. Every night, in my private, heart to heart talk with him, I dismiss all over-anxious care, and say: “I lay me down in peace, and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety.”

Friend, who kept you all through last night in quiet slumber?

Before you close your eyes to night will you have a little talk with him, in sweet assurance, and hope committing yourself to his care till morning's dawn? Then arise, thank him, and ask his protection and guidance for the day? Yes, through the day as well as through the night we are dependent on heaven's keeping. In all besetments and ailments in life our Father's help is needed. And more, it may be expected. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war, from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth."

If we could only remember it, and think of it as we should, "The Lord is our Refuge and Strength in every time of trouble." So, why not hope in him? If Jonah could have hope in HIS terrible situation, surely no posture of circumstances can ever deprive us of the same buoyant grace. Therefore, "Hope thou in God." for he is the "Help of thy countenance, and thy God."

But note again: Thanksgiving and profession belong to genuine prayer. Jonah said: "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed." Hast thou, dear friend, accepted the Lord as thy Saviour? Then do not forget his benefits. 'He forgiveth all thy iniquities, healeth all thy diseases, redeemeth thy life from destruction, crowneth thee with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, satisfieth thy mouth with good things, executeth righteousness and judgment for all oppressed, is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.' Surely, a heart that feels right will be immediately prompted to thank him, and to acknowledge him before others. This is a very little thing, is it not? The Lord expects it,—asks it.

Sanford Cobb, Persian missionary, once said to a young man: "Do you ever feel thankful when God blesses you?" "Always," was the reply. "Did you ever tell him so?" "Well, I don't know that I have." "Well, try it, my young friend, try it, try it. Tell him so; tell him aloud; tell him so that you are sure you will hear it yourself." Long afterwards that young man said: "That was a new revelation to me. I found that I had only been glad, not grateful. But I have been telling the Giver of all Good with grateful feelings ever since, to my soul's help and comfort."

This we are all to consider is the Lord's due. Who, without delay, will render it to him?

But another thing: in prayer is resignation. God answered Jonah, but answered strictly in his own time and way. This is the Father's constant, loving method. We are far too finite and short sighted to have our own way. Human wills should ever be subordinated to the divine will. "We get our wishes when our wishes are molded by his word." The highest reason persuades to this. "Christ loves us a great deal too well to give our own foolish and selfish wills the key of his treasure house." Therefore, leave the mode of answer entirely to the Hearer of Prayer. Faithfully study his word, and thankfully accept his good things, along the channel he is pleased to use in sending them. His way will always be better than ours.

Early in the sixteenth century, a pious man in Germany mourns over the corruptions of the church, and most earnestly longs for a reformation. He prays fervently and often for the conversion of Maxamilian, the Emperor, that through him true religion may be revived. He feels his prayer is to be answered. It was answered, but how? One evening Martin Luther, who was then but a charity student, was out walking with a young friend, when a sudden flash of lightning kills the companion by his side. This so startled Luther that he resolved on the spot to devote his whole life to service of Christ in the gospel ministry.

Now notice, the substance of the good man's prayer was that Germany might be gospelized. But he was dictating the instrumentality, for he asked that this be done through the Emperor. In infinite wisdom God chose his own instrumentality, and so qualified Martin Luther that he did more for the reformation of the church in Germany than many Maxamilians could have done had they been ever so thoroughly converted.

We do not know, nor can we always know, what are the best means for God to employ in accomplishing his good pleasure. But we do know something of the great ends he has to bring about, and that he will use the wisest means for their accomplishment.

"In some way or other
The Lord will provide.
It may not be MY way,
It may not be THY way,
And yet in his OWN way
The Lord will provide."

Being infinite in resources, the All Wise Hearer of Prayer has choice of many methods, and he has also his own reasons for preferring now one, then another. The kind of answer that will be granted earnest prayer is determined by sovereign wisdom and love. Miss Proctor has well written—

Pray, though the gift you ask for
May never comfort your fears,
May never repay your pleading;
Yet pray, and with hopeful tears.
An answer—not that you sought for,
But diviner—will come one day;
Your eyes are too dim to see it,
Yet strive and wait and pray.

But a final lesson should not be forgotten. There is great benefit in going apart to commune with God, or in being forced to be alone with God as Jonah was.

No great purpose was ever achieved by any individual until his spirit had first gone out into some solitude,—it may have been a wilderness one,—and there discovered its own weakness in itself, but its own untold strength when it relies upon no help but that of the Almighty. This is the experience of all the greatest among men and women. “They go apart from their fellows for a while, like Moses into the land of Midian, or like our Lord himself into a desert place, or like Paul into Arabia, and there, in solitary communion with God, they come to themselves. From that communion with God; from that highest of all companionships they drink in strength to fit them for the work of their lives.”

Let us be sure of it, alone with God we may get visions that will fill our souls, visions that will never fade afterwards, but will serve as beacon lights to guide us through storm and darkness, till the high purpose God has for us in life is finished.

Alone with God, too, we need to go in time of temptation. Prayer is the quickest, safest, surest and best means of defense against the assault of the adversary.

A prominent christian man said: “When I was a boy, I was much helped by Bishop Hamline, who visited at the house where I was. Taking me aside, he said: ‘When in trouble, my lad, kneel down and ask God’s help, but never climb over the fence into the

devil's ground, and then kneel down and ask help. Pray from God's side of the fence.' "Of the Bishop's words," said the man, "I have thought every day of my life since, and often, by following them, in times of sudden temptation, I have been kept from getting over to the devil's side of the fence at all."

How much better for every one if this same lesson was early learned, and ever practiced.

Alone with God! I love the place;
There seek the guidance of his grace;
In secret converse of the mind,
Some sweet foretaste of Heaven I find.

Shut in my closet, oft I meet
My Lord, and hold communion sweet;
There shed the penitential tear,
His pard'ning voice enraptured hear.

There all his promises I plead;
Give all his invitations heed;
Pay thanks with joy, inquire, believe;
Abundant help from him receive.

When earth's distractions are withdrawn;
When noise and vanity are gone;
Sweet peace ensues when tempest-driven,
As God imparts a glimpse of heaven.

So, where none else can see or hear;
To him who bows his gracious ear,
With loving trust I oft look up,
And soon exult in blessed hope.

How void and empty life would be,
If, Lord, I could not talk to thee
In secret chamber. Help me prize
This boon till caught above the skies,

Where I shall view thee on thy throne,
See glad before thee all thine own
Enrobed in white and wearing palms,
While I, too, swell their lofty psalms.

Delivered.

And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.—Jonah 2:10.

They cry unto Jehovah in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.
He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
Then are they glad because they are quiet;
So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

—David.

Never delay
To do the duty which the hour brings,
Whatever it be in great or smaller things;
For who doth know
What he shall do the coming day?

—Goethe.

XI.

DELIVERED

Jonah prayed in penitence, faith and expectation as confident as if already realized, and was soon released from his ictyic prison. He gave thanks, vowed vows, expressed his assurance of deliverance, "And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land."

It would seem that the fish disgorged him immediately after his prayer. But it had to be commanded to give him up. The irrational creatures have wills; often much more will than reason. They are betimes stubborn. But God controls them. He governs "all his creatures and all their actions." Wind and storm fulfill his word. So do "dragons and all deeps."

We may not know how God does this. The Scriptures, however, often affirm the fact. He spake to this fish and it gave up its living treasure. God had commanded the prophet, and he disobeyed. In some way he now commanded the fish. He laid his will upon it, and it forthwith obeyed—a pattern to the prophet after his release.

The fish was unwilling to give up the man it had swallowed. It had to be told to do it. Yea, had to be constrained to do it. God, in his own unspeakable way, must need control its will. And how complete and absolute his power over his creatures is clear from the language used. All he had to do was to speak to it—simply give it a hint of his wish. Not that he used words, as he often condescends to do to his rational creatures. Not this are we to think; but that somehow, in his own ineffable way, he exerted upon it the law and command of his will. That was the all-sufficient thing. For the divine will that any thing should be is both law and fulfillment. "He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast." Laying the power of his almighty will on the unwilling fish brings about the desire of his will forthwith. So in his works of providence he "governs all his creatures."

Jonah being delivered, the next thing the narrative tells us is that he was recalled. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying: Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

Here, the thing that seems remarkable to us is, there is no upbraiding of the prophet in any terms whatever. The Lord had rebuked

his wayward servant by the shipwreck, and by entombment in the fish, and let that suffice. In exalted dignity, and matchless patience, he now simply recalls him to the same duty he had before declined. As in later years Peter, after his base denial, so now Jonah is not only forgiven, but restored to his office, and receives anew his commission. After his late perverse disobedience, it is very proper that he should be tested in this way. He now has opportunity to prove the sincerity of his repentance by performing the service which before he had shirked.

The prophet might, indeed, have seemed to himself and to others unworthy to be again inspired of God. But "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," and whom he chasteneth he loveth. The late shirking runaway is now a changed man. Jehovah's all-perceiving eye sees it, and, by one of his most special favors, gives at once to him the very trust he had before deserted.

The same trust, in substance, it was. At least, it is not softened any. If any thing, the message now is more rigid than before. The first command was: "Go to Nineveh," and reprove her for her sin. Now it is: "Go," and declare her overthrow.

His instructions are positive. "Preach the preaching," or more exactly, "proclaim the proclamation that I bid thee." The Lord charged him to obey his command to the letter. He must not soften, explain away, or let down the meaning of the message. He must not consider his own reputation, or the ears of his hearers, or mingle soothing with severe words, or blunt the edge of his proclamation with ingenious phraseology. He is bound to declare openly just what was commanded him. He dare not cry, "peace, peace, when there is no peace." Like Paul to the Ephesians, he must declare the whole counsel of God. He must declare the message God gives him to declare, and that only.

So the conscientious, devoted minister of Christ always does. The real language of his heart, like that of the Apostle, is: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" He is set for the defense of the truth of God. That truth, whatever it may be, he is bound to proclaim. He dare not depart from the truth; he dare not withhold the truth. Speak it out he must,—speak it in love, of course, and always, but speak it without changing its terms, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear," his instructions read.

Jonah now, just after his severe lesson, knew this and obeyed. Responding to this second call, he fulfills his commission. Very different from his former conduct. Before, "he arose and fled." Now "he arose and went," as ready to obey, as once to disobey.

Note here that Jonah's obedient conduct exemplifies true conversion. A soul new-born shows the same energy in serving God it before had shown in serving self, or the world. Saul, the ardent persecutor, became, after conversion, Paul all aflame in the service of the church and its Lord. Here is the way, let every one walk in it. The son in the parable, called by his father to work in his vineyard, was at first disobedient, but afterwards "repented and went," thus doing the will of his father, and becoming an example to us and to all.

The will of our Heavenly Father is to be the rule of our conduct. When in mercy and love he speaks from heaven, "this is my beloved Son, hear ye him," we gain for ourselves infinite blessing by heartily heeding. Jonah was like the erstwhile disobedient son, only Jonah had to be brought to submission by severe discipline. But well for him, and for the Ninevites, that he became as willing as before he was unwilling.

Worthy of remark at this point is his promptness. The command was, "Arise, go." At once, it would seem, he "arose and went." He made no delay, showed no hesitancy after he was called.

It is true, an interval of some time may have elapsed between his deliverance by the fish and his commission. The word "arise" seems to intimate that he had settled down, and was staying quietly in one place. Some think that after his release from his strange prison, he had gone to Jerusalem to pay his vows, and that he was there when the voice of the Lord called him the second time. But it seems more natural to hold with others, that he had at once returned to his former home, Gath-hepher, and was there enjoying leisure, or engaged in some old time duties. He may have hoped that God would accept his late punishment and his repentance, and would not again call him to go to Nineveh. Any how, he seems to have been settled somewhere, for the words, "Arise, go," would not have been spoken to one who was on his way.

Then, too, it seems natural to infer an interval, for this would allow time for the tidings of so great a miracle to spread far and wide,—especially to reach Nineveh, and help prepare the minds of its people for the preaching of the one they knew to have been so marvellously delivered.

But the narrative supplies us with none of these incidents. Jonah does not speak of himself, but only of his mission as God taught him. He simply tells of the second call which came to him, and of his very prompt obedience, which will claim attention in the next chapter, where we may view him brave and fearless, mightily under the inspiring power of the Spirit of God which now so fully controlled him.

Preaching.

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said: Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.—
Jonah 3:4.

Be strong!

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift,
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle; face it. 'Tis God's gift.

Be strong!

It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long.
Faint not, fight on! Tomorrow comes the song.

—Maltbie D. Babcock.

XII.

PREACHING

From prayer to preaching is the approved order of service. This is the order heaven blesses. The closet before the pulpit, if the pulpit would have closets filled with suppliants. From your knees to the sanctuary, O man of God, if you would get hearers on their knees before the Lord. One's own heart must first be right with heaven, or he will have but little power in persuading other hearts to the right way.

Jonah, in penitence, prayed in faith and confident hope in God, and his preaching which soon followed resulted in immediate and amazing effects. A whole city—a city of hitherto heathen people, who possessed not a single copy of God's holy word, who never had heard the voice of one of the Lord's prophets, listened, awe struck, repented, fasted and called upon God with much outward manifestation of a thorough change in heart and life. Jonah's preaching, used that day as the humble instrument, under God, of renovating a vast populace, may well enlist our thoughtful study. Where, and in what manner did he proclaim his message, and what was the substance of the message proclaimed?

The mind naturally inquires first about the PLACE of his fulfilled mission.

The name of the city, Nineveh, is often given. Nearly as often, too, is it described by the word "great." This frequent re-mentioning of its magnitude was, doubtless, with a purpose. The word would suggest its size. It was at that time the largest city of the world. It may also have been repeatedly called great so as to prepare Jonah's mind for the colossal task before him, lest when he came face to face with it, he should be appalled and draw back. Or third, the term so often used may be an argument for God's compassion, as is evidently the case in chapter 4:11.

The margin of our Bibles gives the true reading—"great to God." The habit of the Hebrew mind was devout. It was accustomed to recognize God in every thing; especially in whatever was greatest and best on earth. Viewing something great or grand, sometimes the pious mind would attribute its existence, or its magnificence to Jehovah's creative and formative power. Hence we have such expressions as "the mountains of God," "cedars of God," "trees of the Lord which

he hath planted," and so forth. That is, he is the Author, Upholder and Beautifier of them.

In other places in the Bible, the use of the terms, denoting superior excellence or greatness, clearly suggests to the mind that the object to which they are applied will bear the scrutiny of God himself—meaning that HE considers them what the writer affirms them to be. In Genesis 10:9 is a case of this kind. Nimrod is called "a mighty hunter before the Lord." Also in Acts 7:20, margin, it is affirmed of Moses, he was "fair to God," that is, fair in God's estimation. In this way, too, understanding the strong adjective applied to this capital city of Assyria, especially in chapter 4:11, we may paraphrase, "Nineveh was a city, great, not only to man's thinking, but to God's."

But what is known about Nineveh's greatness? The third chapter says, it "was an exceeding great city of three day's journey." By this we are, doubtless, to understand it was so great in circuit it would take three days, walking at the usual rate of twenty miles a day, to pass around it. This is the most probable, and the most generally received opinion, both of Bible scholars, historians and travellers.

We are told, too, that it was in the shape of a parallelogram, having its main houses and inhabitants, like separate cities, at its four corners; with villas and villages between, and also with large parks, and, besides these, land under tillage within its circuit. Moreover, "that its walls were a hundred feet high, and broad enough to allow three chariots abreast, and, besides, were fortified and variegated with fifteen-hundred towers, each two hundred feet high." These dimensions are confirmed by heathen historians, many of them by actual, modern measurements.

The city had many inhabitants. The fourth chapter and eleventh verse of the book mentions its little children as numbering one hundred and twenty thousand, which authorizes the estimation of the population at some where from six hundred thousand to one million. For those days it was a great city, truly.

But the subject matter of Jonah's preaching ought to be specially considered. We are told that he "began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said: Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The text seems clearly to imply that he uttered just this one cry. But it may well be thought that he repeated it over and over as he progressed through the city, or zigzagged its thoroughfares.

Imagination may picture this stranger, "an unknown Hebrew,

in a prophet's austere garb, passing through the splendid streets, of the proudest town of the eastern world," and wherever a crowd would gather, pausing a moment in his walk, and repeating his doleful cry in their ears. Or, we may think of him as he advanced, turning his face this way and then that way, time after time proclaiming his message.

By the word "cried" we are to understand that he made proclamation, in loud and deliberate tones, as the forerunner of a king was accustomed to do.

To an oriental mind, this oft repeated announcement might be more startling than a labored address. The very solitariness of the one message would inspire the more awe. So it came about that Jonah's single sentence, uttered in his solemn, ringing voice, a whole day, produced a most marked immediate impression. In Noah's time, one hundred and twenty years of warning were given to men. Yet they repented not till the flood came, and it was too late. But in the case of Nineveh, God granted a double mercy—first, that its people should repent right away after the threatening, and second, that pardon should at once follow their repentance.

It is surely remarkable that one day's preaching was enough. The whole thing was certainly of God. He had many wonderfully wise and blessed purposes in mind, in bringing about so soon such a striking reformation, among such a people, by such means.

The Almighty never lacks for expedients. Neither is he limited either in power or in mercy.

But the inquiry arises: did Jonah pass entirely through the city in one day? Some think he did. The distance was only eighteen or twenty miles. Moreover, in approaching Nineveh from Palestine, he would enter the city on its west side. And as chapter 4:3 shows him on the east side of the city just afterwards, they suppose that he traversed a main street from side to side of the city while he uttered his "one deep, brief cry of woe." Many, however, claim the more natural thought to be, that the now bold prophet perambulated the city, going hither and thither, as far as was possible in one day.

Either view may strengthen our thought of the great impressibility of the Ninevites, and their readiness to believe and repent; which idea, the inspired penman evidently designed to convey. And we surely get a most vivid conception of how easily these people were now moved, and how ripe they were for repentance, by supposing "that while the preacher himself was seen and heard in only a portion

of the vast city, his message was taken up and repeated, and sped, and bore fruit rapidly in every direction, till tidings of what was happening came to the king himself," who, deeply affected thereby, hastily issued the edict which summoned all the people to marked humiliation before God.

The moral grandeur of this whole scene can never be adequately pictured. Simple and brief is the description in the verse. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh overthrown." The mind's eye sees the promptitude of the prophet's action. He entered upon his difficult and dangerous task without delay, or hesitation, or inquiry, just as soon as he reached the city, it would seem.

His boldness, too, begets admiration. He stands in the "great city" alone, a stranger, an unknown Hebrew, a representative of a religion despised by the people who hear him. He has no credentials from his own king according him to them, and no permit from their king to preach in their city. He has near him no companion, acquaintance, committees, or body guard of police or soldiers. He enters no synagogue, sanctuary, or cathedral; has no Bible, hymn book, organ, or choir, and no singing. He offers no audible prayer in reverent tones, while worshippers around him bow their heads. In his preaching he does not present the only Savior; does not even cry, repent; nor does he hold out any promise whatever, so far as his exact words are given us. He simply threatens doom. With loud, bold, commanding tones, he exclaims: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown." And this he did for a whole day, did it to gazing, startled hearers, not changing his words, nor softening their import. Surely, he was as one bearding the lion in his den. Or as Nahum 2:11 words it: like one adventuring himself into—

"The dwelling place of the lions,
And the feeding place of the young lions,
Where the lion, even the old lion, walked,
And the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid."

No, Jonah, in his bold venture, was not harmed. No body answered back. No one opposed, contradicted, objected, or interrupted. No officer of the law interfered. No mob assaulted him. The crowds gazed, we may suppose, and were awe struck at once. All through the city, of each one of untold thousands were Nahum's other words literally true:

“The heart melteth,
The knees smite together,
And the faces of them all gather blackness.”

O, magnify the Lord, and stand in awe of him. He who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men; who sent the storm to overwhelm Jonah, and the fish to save him, also sent fear and awe and trembling and deep contrition into vast multitudes of Assyrian souls that day. Exalted praises be to his name.

Effects

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even unto the least of them.—Jonah 3:5.

This is ever God's manner, when men change their deeds, to change his doom; when they renounce their sins, to recall his sentence; when they repent of the evil they have done against him, to repent of the evil he had said he would do against them. . . . Never was a man truly and inwardly humbled, but God, in the riches of his special mercy in Christ, truly pardoned him.—Bishop Sanderson.

XIII.

EFFECTS

Jonah's preaching bore fruit at once. Before his first day's labors closed, multitudes were prostrate in prayer. The change in them was remarkable. The chapter tells us they believed in God, they repented, and they obtained respite from the threatened doom.

They believed in God. This included three things. First, they believed in the God of the Hebrews as the true God. Second, they believed in the power of this one supreme God to carry out the threat which he had made through the prophet. Third, they believed in his mercy and willingness to pardon the penitent. All this was marvellous faith in heathen. It contrasted most favorably with that of the Lord's people. "So great faith had not been found, no not in Israel."

Using various considerations, the Holy Spirit wrought this scriptural belief in their hearts. The true reading in the verse is: "They believed in God." This is more than the idea in our king James' translation—"they believed God." To believe God, is to believe what God says is true. To believe *IN*, or *ON*, God expresses more. It declares belief as resting in God,—trusting itself and all its concerns to him. It combines hope and trust with faith and love too, since, without love there cannot be trust. They believed in God as the God over all; believed in his power; cast themselves on his mercy; entrusted themselves entirely to his goodness and love; whilst they felt the deepest awe and reverence for his character.

But they did not stop with mere faith. Along with this they also repented. This proved that their faith was genuine. True belief and true repentance go together. They are never separated in the heart of any one who is truly saved. So was it in this case. Right at once, along with the faith these Ninevites exercised, true penitence was shown by their conduct. They "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth." Not a few of them, merely, did this, but the mass of the people, "from the greatest of them even to the least of them," did it.

We seem to be clearly authorized from the narrative to understand that the people believed and repented as fast as they heard Jonah's message. One did not wait for another. By common consent they fasted and humbled themselves. They waited not for the supreme authority. Time was urgent, and they would lose none of it. In this imminent peril of God's displeasure, they acted as men at a fire,

who do not wait for orders to put it out, if they can, or to keep it from spreading. No time for red tape then. Prompt and vigorous action is the thing called for. So now the people seem to have been moved *EN MASSE*, and at once. One did not dally for another. Out of the one common terror, there arose one common cry: 'a fast, a fast, let us humble ourselves before THE God.'

In a city so large, and with forms so complex and dilly-dallying as those required in approaching Eastern monarchs, it would take time to reach the king, and get an edict from him. So, the exigency being imminent, the people did in advance, what they deeply felt was proper, and what they strongly believed the king would order. if he knew and felt the emergency as they did. With one consent "they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from their great even to their little." This was the earliest effect of Jonah's preaching,—it moved the people greatly.

But the influence widened. The tide of penitence and humiliation rose higher and higher till it reached and included the king and his nobles. "Word came unto the King," we are told. Here read "and" instead of "for". "AND the matter came unto the king." That is, in addition to the people's knowledge and actions, the whole account came, before long, to the ears of the chief ruler of the city. He heard how this stranger, in odd attire had come; what had befallen him before he came; how he preached; how the people already believed him; as well as what they had done and were doing. At last he heard it all, and soon, in his own person, was as penitent as the lowliest of his subjects. In the common peril he believed as they did, and humbled himself with them.

How vivid is the description of the influence upon the king, and his resultant actions. Print and ponder clause of the narrative under clause, thus:

"He arose from his throne,
Laid his robe from him,
Covered him with sackcloth,
Sat in ashes,
And caused it to be proclaimed
And published through Nineveh,
By the decree of the king and his nobles,
Saying:

Let neither man nor beast,
Herd nor flock,
Taste any thing.
Let them not feed
Nor drink water,
But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth,
And cry mightily unto God;
Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way,
And from the violence that is in his hands."

All these things are signs of repentance. See how many there are, and how striking and suggestive of deep contrition.

The king "arose" from his throne. The word denotes both deep feeling and prompt action. He lost no time. He heard, and left his throne at once.

"And he put off his robe." The throne, or great chair of Assyrian kings, was an elaborate thing. It was supported by animals and human figures. The description of it reminds one of what I Kings 10:20 says of the throne of Solomon, which "had six steps, and had stays (or arms) on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood by the stays. And twelve lions stood there, on the one side and on the other, upon the six steps."

Such a throne as that the king now left to sit in a heap of ashes. But not with his royal apparel on. He laid that aside. Layard says, his dress "consisted of a long flowing garment, edged with fringes and tassels, descending to his ankles, and confined at the waist by a girdle. Over this robe a second, similarly ornamented, and open in front, appears to have been thrown. From his shoulders fell a cope, or hood, also adorned with tassels; and to it were attached two long ribbons, or lappets. He wore a conical mitre, or tiara, which distinguishes the monarchs in Assyrian bas-reliefs, and seems to have been reserved for him alone. Around the neck of the king was a necklace. He wore ear-rings. And his arms, which were bare from a little above the elbow, were encircled by armlets and bracelets remarkable for the beauty of their forms. The clasps were formed by the heads of animals, and the center by stars and rosettes, probably inlaid with precious stones."

What a wonderful contrast between this magnificent dress and the wrapping of sackcloth he put about him! What a contrast between his throne and the ash pile in which he now sat. Could tokens of humiliation be any more marked?

Sackcloth was the coarse, rough hair cloth which was worn as an outward token of the deepest inner penitence and humiliation. The king,—the late proud and gorgeously arrayed monarch,—did not hesitate to put on such a garb. He must have been very deeply moved, indeed. Many of the people had listened to Jonah's warning voice, and noted his solemn manner. The king did not hear the preacher at all. Only the report of his warning cry, and of his immediate past experience, had come to his ears. But this thoroughly changes his heart, and his dress and posture as a visible sign of it. He humbles himself with the very lowliest of his subjects.

Nor did he stop there, but used his royal authority over others. He issued an earnest edict calling all the people to immediate fasting, humiliation and prayer. And to add weight to his call, he had his nobles join him in it.

Seventy-nine years later Darius associated his princes with himself in his decree consigning Daniel to the lion's den. That was the law among the Babylonian kings. The princes took part in the government.

But not so with the earlier Assyrian kings. Each ruler was an absolute monarch. His own will was law. Ordinarily his nobles were mere figure heads. But now, deeply humbled as he was, he "brings forth fruits meet for repentance," by associating his grandees, or great men, with himself in this decree so hurriedly and widely issued and published.

What a blessing it is when rulers are religious! What a blessing when they fear God and obey him, setting the people an example of piety and humility, and when, in a loving, wise and proper way, they use their authority in trying to guide the people in the paths of righteousness. Blessed is that people who "are in such a case."

But notice this Nineveh king's proclamation. It showed him to be deeply exercised. It was earnest, wide, even all inclusive. He gave charge that neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, should taste any thing—should not feed or drink water; moreover, that both should be covered with sackcloth, and that the people, in penitence, should cry mightily to God, and turn from all evil and sin. So ran the decree.

The oriental character has always been demonstrative. It indulges much in signs and symbols. The Bible is full of instances. So none need wonder that dumb animals were included with man in this call of Nineveh's king to fasting and humiliation. The common

instinct and practice of mankind has always been in this direction. When the Persian general, Masistias, was slain, the horses and mules of the Persians were shorn as well as themselves. Self-humiliation would have every thing reflect its own lowliness. The Bible teaches us that the brute creatures share in the evil effects of man's sin. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." And in this Nineveh case, the dumb animals were made to share in man's outward signs of sorrow. This was according to Eastern custom.

Nor has a like prompting of heart departed from people in christian lands. In some places it is not uncommon now at the funerals of the rich, to choose black horses and cover them with black velvet. And how almost universal it is to show signs of mourning in our dress, our food, our houses, our equipage, and whatever else belongs to us.

The lowings and moanings of the hungry sheep and oxen, and the sackcloth-clad horses and mules on Nineveh's streets, may have incited the now really humbled inhabitants still more powerfully to repentance. There may, too, have been, in some measure, the feeling, which we now know to be scriptural, that the dumb brutes belong to God; that he cares for them, and will hear their cry. At any rate, beast as well as man was included in the king's call to universal fasting, and to the use of signs to indicate their humiliation. He and they wished all they owned to help show how fully and truly they repented.

Too often is it forgotten that our dumb creatures are to be used in God's service. But if we honor the Lord with all our substance, as required, we will show it by the way we use our live stock. We own them; God owns us. Therefore he owns them along with us, and expects us to see to it that they are used in ways that he approves, and that will go to evince that it is our purpose to honor him with all we have, as well as with all we are.

But another sign of the true penitence of these Ninevites was prayer. They were charged by the king to cry mightily to God. There was to be no mild pleading. "Faint prayer does not express strong desire." Nor does a half heart get what it asks for, because it does not "pour out" the soul unto God in earnest yearning. There is scriptural authority for saying that effectual, fervent prayer avails much. The mighty cry of these Ninevites at this time proved this Bible promise. Moreover, besides being a sign of penitence, their prayer was heard.

But added to the evidences of humiliation and prayer, their genuine repentance was also shown by their turning from sin. In

fact this was the best sign of all. This was the very substance, the heart, the core of their repentance. Prayer without reformation is a mockery of God. Merely having a sense of sin, and hoping for mercy from God, while the sin is still cherished and held on to, is not repentance. This never gains pardon, acceptance, justification and salvation. These Ninevites not only humbled themselves, and cried mightily to the Lord, but they also turned every one from the evil of his way, forsook violence and put his hope in God.

It is so with people now. There must be an abhorrence of sin, a real forsaking of it, and accepting of God in its stead. There must be a struggling against sin, and a glad taking of Christ into the heart where sin once reigned. Then, and only then, can the soul read its "title clear to mansions in the skies." True "repentance is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience."

But a third thing to note about the people of Nineveh in that emergency is that they obtained a respite from the threatened overthrow. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not." He extended pardon. He did not overthrow the city then, as threatened, because his warning had its intended effect. It was his secret purpose to show his readiness to forgive, and to glorify his mercy; also, to shame the impenitence of Israel, and, at the same time, give an earnest of the future conversion of the Gentiles. This was something of God's lofty and loving design.

But inquire, what was the bottom thing that called for the divine mercy now?

Just the same as that which always gains heaven's favor. It was not the fasting alone, or the sackcloth alone, or the moruning, or the sitting so humbly in ashes, nor all of these combined. No, not these, but the really changed life of penitents. God looked at the heart. He "saw their works." What works? That they fasted? That they put on sackcloth? He passes by these and says, "That every one turned from his evil way." That is why God "repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them." That is why the people were plucked from their peril. Their genuinely changed life made God propitious to them. Their fasting was all right as a sign of true repentance. But the CORE of their penitence did not consist in abstain-

ing from food, but in the avoidance of sin. So they obtained mercy from the Lord. Whoever would sincerely and truly fast, must show it by hating sin, by turning from it unto God, and by really and truly showing new obedience—that is, an obedience prompted by a new motive of heart—love to God. The heart right before the Lord gains his favor.

But when the verse says “God repented,” what are we to understand by the word? Just the same we are to understand in many other places in the Bible where the same term is used. The thought of repentance seems strange to us when applied to the divine character, for we are told often that God changes not. Right reason also proves that if he be God, then he must be unchangeable. So, many good people have often been perplexed over the terms—“God repented.”

Thoughtfully pondering, however, may not the following considerations be helpful?

First, the language is used in accommodation to human conceptions and modes of speech. When MAN truly repents, he changes his conduct. A change of action denotes a change of mind. So, when GOD, to our VIEW, seems to change his course of procedure, and is said to repent, this is but using terms to suit finite ideas.

Again, we cannot look on the human and the divine side at the same time. Could we take our place beside God, and see as he sees, then we would know that “he is not man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent.” Then we would be positively sure that “known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world,” and that with him “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” But having our standpoint, not with God, but as yet with man, who, as long as he is in the body, has only partial vision and knowledge, the language suited to our as yet inadequate conceptions is: “It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” “God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them.”

The one set of scriptures speak of God from the divine side; the other set from the human side. Properly it may be affirmed, both views of the divine character are true. Moreover, they are in perfect harmony with each other; though the Scriptures never attempt to harmonize them, nor is it wise for us to attempt to do so. We cannot look upon both sides of the shield at once.

The problem may also be presented a third way. God is infinitely just. He is also infinitely merciful. Whenever men sin his justice

arouses, and, sooner or later, its stroke must fall. Whenever men repent, his mercy immediately goes forth towards them. This must be so, whether we understand it or not, or else God would not be God, justice and mercy would never kiss each other in Christ, and we could have no hope.

Now, when the divine message was sent through the Lord's servant to the Ninevites, "they were so ripe for judgment, that a purpose of destruction to take effect in forty days was the only word God's righteous abhorance of sin admitted of as to them. But when they repented, the posture in which they stood towards God's righteousness was altered. So God's mode of dealing with them must alter accordingly, if God is not to be inconsistent with his own immutable character of dealing with men according to their works and state of heart, taking vengeance at last on the hardened impenitent, and delighting to show mercy to the penitent."

So the Scriptures unmistakably teach. Read it in Ezekiel—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. * * * * But if the wicked will turn from all his sins * * * he shall surely live; he shall not die. * * * * Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should turn from his ways and live."

God's method of procedure in carrying out his justice and his mercy are the opposite of each other. But in changing from the exercise of the one to the exercise of the other, there is no change whatever in his character. The Divine Being, in his essential righteousness and mercy, never changes. The one goes forth when there is call for it, and so the other. This is his unchanging character.

In the case of these Ninevites, "what was really a change in THEM, and in God's corresponding dealings, is, in mere condescension to human conception, spoken of as a change in God." The announcement of destruction to Nineveh was a truthful representation of God's purpose towards the city in its existing state, and also of what was actually due the unrepentant people. When that state ceased, however, then a new relation of Nineveh to God, not contemplated in the message, came in; then a path for the divine mercy is made, and that mercy goes forth. There was no change in the divine character, no change in the divine mind and purpose, which, from all eternity, was and is to punish sin and pardon penitence.

O, praise the Lord for his mercy and his truth, his justice and his love.

“How wondrous are our Father’s ways,
How firm his truth, how large his grace;
He takes his mercy for his throne,
And thence he makes his glories known.

Yea, his eternal love is sure
To all the saints, and shall endure;
From age to age his truth shall reign,
Nor children’s children hope in vain.”

Passing by other practical lessons suggested by Nineveh’s repentance, take in mind these two. First, how inexcusable are nominal believers in christian lands. These Ninevites were idolators. They had no express revelation of mercy, and no special instruction in the truths and the will of God. Yet, under one brief sermon of a foreign preacher, a stranger, and upon a mere peradventure of respite from overthrow, they became earnest, fervent, prompt, self-denying and humble in seeking mercy.

How superior this to the course of many who are much more highly favored. All their lives, multitudes, all over our land and others, have had repeated warnings, instructions, invitations and promises of scripture, yet have thoughtlessly, or wilfully, persisted in unbelief, impenitence, self-indulgence and procrastination, to the dishonor of God and to the hurt of their own souls. O how important to remember: “To whom much is given, of him will much be required.” The repentant Ninevites are a reproof to all the impenitent in christian lands.

Second, Let every one sincerely seeking to the Lord have hope. Nineveh was in the very jaws of destruction. The mass of the people may have been only transiently impressed and partially reformed. Yet, God readily hearkened to their cry, and spared them on the very first dawn of repentance. What a blessed encouragement this is to every broken hearted penitent, and believing suppliant now. Oh, who will not at once avail himself of God’s mercy, by humiliation, prayer and the forsaking of sin, just as the people of Nineveh did? The way is exactly the same for us now it was for them then. Rev. A. E. Evans has given us words very suitable for a penitent and believing approach to the mercy seat. Use them.

Lord, to Thee alone we turn,
To thy cross for safety fly;
There, as penitents, to learn
How to live and how to die.

Sinful, on our knees we fall;
Hear us, as for help we plead;
Hear us when on thee we call;
Aid us in our time of need.—Amen

Why Effective?

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not.—Jonah 3:9.

I stood outside the gate,
A poor wayfaring child;
Within my breast there beat
A tempest loud and wild.
A fear oppressed my soul
That I might be too late;
And Oh! I trembled sore,
And prayed outside the gate.

"Mercy! " I loudly cried,
"Oh! give me rest from sin."
"I will," a voice replied;
And Mercy let me in.
She bound my bleeding wounds;
She soothed my aching head;
She eased my burdened soul,
And bore the load instead.

—Josephine Pollard.

XIV.

WHY EFFECTIVE?

The sudden conversion of these Ninevites was, indisputably, a most remarkable thing. It was this for two reasons.

First, from the make-up and character of the people themselves. With scarce an exception, they were rooted and grounded in long cherished prejudice. Throughout their whole national life they had been idolators, as had been their ancestors before them. They believed in "Lords many and Gods many." Both Assyrian monuments and records disclose a "vast pantheon, which was the boast of king and people alike." Their minds saw in this great host, first, Asshur, the great lord ruling supreme over all the gods, and next, "his twelve greater, and four-thousand inferior, deities, presiding over all the manifestations of nature and all complications of human life." At all times they felt their strength and their hope to lie in the multitude of their gods.

Filled with this idea, they considered any nation feeble and defenceless indeed, which possessed only one divinity as its protector. Sennacherib, at the head of the Assyrian army, before Jerusalem, through one of his chief officers sent as a committee, taunted Hezekiah, the Hebrew king, with his useless reliance on his single national God—Javeh—of whose nature this proud general had so reprehensibly inadequate an idea as to place him on the same level of power with the gods of Hamath, and Arpad, or any other Assyrian idol.

Thus the people had been indoctrinated for long generations. No evangelical instruction had ever been imparted to them. Patriarch or prophet had never taught them the right way. How wondrous, then, it is that now, so suddenly, both ruler and people should accept and acknowledge Jehovah, the God of the Jews, as THE God. The king, in his proclamation, cries out: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent?" He uses the term Jehovah—meaning the One Supreme God over all,—the only blessed divine Ruler of the Jewish nation, who had ever been their stay and their defense.

Thus the king exhorts. And the people humble themselves before Jehovah, and cry mightily for his mercy. All this is the more remarkable because it is contrary to all else we know of this idolatrous nation.

Remarkable, too, was that revival in Nineveh from the standpoint

of JONAH's part in it. He was a plain garbed stranger. So far as we know, he repeated but a single sentence, and that only for one day. He produced no credentials of his office. On the night of Belshazzar's feast, a mysterious hand was suddenly seen writing on the wall, the startling words: "Mene, mene, tekem, upharsin." At Pentecost the disciples spake in varied languages, and "cloven tongues, like as of fire" appeared and "sat upon each of them." So there was a high reason for the conviction of multitudes on each occasion.

But Jonah came without display of authority or power. He wrought no miracle to enforce his prediction. So far as we are told, he did not even call to repentance. Nor did he promise mercy if repentance were shown. Yet we read that the people—all of them—believed in God, fasted in deepest humiliation, and fled their sins; even associated the dumb animals with themselves in the garb of mourning.

Truly, this is all very wonderful, both from the standpoint of the people's unpreparedness, and of Jonah's meager means used. Usually such an advance point in experience is only reached after instruction has been given carefully and repeatedly—"line upon line, precept upon precept"—for months and even years. Evangelism must be both patient and persevering,—must give "here a little, there a little," wait, often for a long time, and then go over the same ground again and again, and keep on with the continual dropping of the truth until impressions are made. Thus only, under the blessing of God, do missionaries commonly gain converts among the heathen.

Why, then, were such a people as these Ninevites, who were so uninstructed evangelically, so greatly exercised in such a way so soon? How came it about? What stirred their hearts so deeply?

Replying, it would be easy to say, God was pleased, in the almightiness of his working, to bring them all at once, under most powerful conviction. This is doubtless true. But in begetting real religious concern, our Heavenly Father is usually pleased to use a variety of means,—often to use them for a long time. Of course, he has power to convince of sin, and draw hearts to himself directly; but his common method, as learned from almost universal experience of christian workers every where is, to do this by the means of considerations of one kind and another, which are impressed upon the mind leading it to thoughtfulness and turning.

Inquire, then, what were some of the things which the Holy Spirit was now pleased to employ to so deeply impress the minds and hearts of the king and people in Nineveh under Jonah's "one deep cry of woe."

One thing; they doubtless knew of, and recalled, the wonderful judgments that, on more than one occasion, Israel's God had inflicted on his enemies. They had heard how Sodom and Gomorrah were, long before, burned with fire and brimstone; how plague after plague had been sent on the Egyptians, and afterwards their army drowned in the Red Sea; how miraculously, and at last suddenly, Jericho had been overthrown; how, thrice in succession, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the alternate companies of fifty each sent out by Ahaziah to arrest, and bring in Elijah. Recalling, perhaps, all these and other "mighty acts," the Holy Spirit so deeply impressed their hearts that they feared before the Lord, showed him reverence, and forsook sin for his service.

But another thing: there is evidence that they felt the greatness of their guilt. The fact of their fasting, and especially of their putting on sackcloth and sitting in ashes, shows this. Their sin pressed heavily upon them. Moreover, the king, in a solemn decree, most earnestly calls every one to turn from his evil way, and from all violence, oppression and injustice. The next verse, too, says: "God saw their works that they turned from their evil way." This is a part of true repentance and sorrow of heart. One must feel the guilt of sin, and the badness of it, or he will not forsake it. The turning of these Assyrians proves they were under true and deep conviction. They strongly felt they were very guilty before God, and feared his judgments. So they repented and turned to him.

And still more than this. They cherished a faint hope of divine clemency. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" cried the king in his authoritative decree and proclamation. And all the people gave heed. Jonah had not expressly called them to repentance. Nor had his message promised mercy. Yet, having some apprehension of the goodness of the Lord, they acted on the general encouragement of an "if, perchance." Their feeling was, 'we cannot tell but God may be persuaded to remit our punishment. Perhaps, his proper, righteous anger may be appeased by our submissions, humiliations and supplications. At least this is the most probable way of escaping the impending destruction.' Their general notion, however vague, of the Supreme Being's inherent mercy, begat a measure of hope in their breasts. And that hope may have been strengthened by the thought that, instead of destroying them at once, Jehovah had sent a messenger to warn them. On this slight token of favor their faith rested, and so

they fondly cherished hope of the possibility of pardon. The Holy Spirit had begotten that hope in their hearts, and then used it to work in them true repentance, and to lead them to outwardly show the marked signs of it.

But note also, fourth, the long standing, inwrought superstitious belief of the people. The Holy Spirit was pleased to powerfully use this fact in their moral make-up to accomplish his present purpose with whelming suddenness.

And what was this superstitious belief?

In his choicely worded and scholarly pamphlet, Dr. Trumbull* well sets it forth, as follows: "Prominent among the divinities of ancient Assyria, as shown by the monuments, was Dagan, a creature part man and part fish. The divinity was in some instances represented as an upright figure, with the head of a fish above the head of a man, the open mouth of the fish forming a miter as the man's sacred head-dress, and the feet of the man extending below the tail of the fish. In other cases, the body of a man was at right angles to the conjoined body of a fish. Images of this fish-god have been found guarding the entrance to palace and temple in the ruins of Nineveh, and they appear upon ancient Babylonian seals in a variety of forms. The name Dagan is found in the cuneiform inscriptions at an early date, as shown in Layard's 'Nineveh and its Remains,' and in Tiele's work. * * * * *

"Now that this fish-god Dagan was an object of worship in early Babylon and Assyria is clear from the monuments. Berosus, a Babylonian historian, writing in the fourth century before our era, records the early traditions concerning the origin of this worship. According to the various fragments of Berosus, preserved in later historical writers, the very beginning of civilization in Chaldea and Babylonia was under the direction of a personage, part man and part fish, who came up out of the sea. According to the account of this tradition, given from Berosus by Apollodorus, 'the whole body of the animal was like that of a fish; and had under a fish's head another head, and also feet below, similar to those of a man, subjoined to the fish's tail.'

"His voice, too, and language, were articulate and human; and a representation of him is preserved even to this day. This being used to converse with men in the day time, but took no food at that season; and he gave them an insight into letters, and sciences, and

*"Light on the Story of Jonah," by Rev. H. Clay Trumbull, D. D., published by J. D. Wattles & Co., Philadelphia.

DAGAN, AS SHOWN ON ORENTAL
MONUMENTS.



1



2



4



3



5

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| 1. Babylonian gems. | 2. Assyrian cylinder, |
| 3. Sculpture at Khorsabad. | 4. Sculpture at Nimroud. |
| 5. Babylonian cylinder. | |

every kind of art. He taught them to construct houses, to found temples, to compile laws, and explained to them the principles of geometrical knowledge. He made them distinguish the seeds of the earth, and showed them how to collect fruits.

‘In short, he instructed them in every thing which could tend to soften manners and humanize mankind. From that time, so universal were his instructions, nothing material has been added by way of improvement. When the sun set, it was the custom of this being to plunge again into the sea, and abide all night in the deep; for he was amphibious.’

“Berous also records that, from time to time, ages apart, other beings, of like nature with this first great teacher, came up out of the sea with fresh instructions for mankind; and that each one of these avatars, or incarnations, marked a new epoch, and the supernatural messenger bore a new name. So it would seem to be clear that, in all those days of Israel’s history within which the book of Jonah can fairly be assigned, the people of Nineveh were believers in a divinity who, from time to time, sent messages to them by a personage who rose out of the sea as part fish and part man.

This being so, is there not a perceptible reasonableness, or logical consistency of movement, in the narrated miracle of Jonah in the fish, and the wonderful success of the fish-ejected Jonah as a preacher in the Assyrian capital?

“What better heralding, as a divinely sent messenger to Nineveh, could Jonah have had, than to be thrown up out of the mouth of a great fish, in the presence of witnesses, say, on the coast of Phœnicia, where the fish-god was a favorite object of worship? Such an incident would have inevitably aroused the mercurial nature of Oriental observers, so that a multitude would be ready to follow the seemingly new avatar of the fish-god, proclaiming his uprising from the sea, as he went on his mission to the city where the fish-god had its very center of worship. And who would wonder that when it was heard in Nineveh that the new prophet among them had come from the very mouth of a fish in the sea, to bring them a divinely sent warning, all the people, ‘from the greatest of them even to the least of them,’ should be ready to heed the warning, and to take steps to avert the impending doom proclaimed by him?

In short, if the book of Jonah is to be looked upon as veritable history, it is clear, in the light of Assyrian records and Assyrian traditions, that there was a sound reason for having Jonah swallowed by

a fish, in order to his coming up out of a fish; and that the recorded sudden and profound alarm of the people of an entire city, at his warning was most natural, as a result of the coincidence of this miracle with their religious beliefs and expectations."

The same author also notes another point that seems to have direct bearing on the subject in hand, to-wit, the fact that Berosus gives the name of the Assyrian fish-god as "Oannes." Now, "while 'oannes' is not the precise equivalent of the name 'Jonah,' it is a form that might naturally have been employed by Berosus, while writing in Greek, if he desired to give an equivalent of Jonah."

Scholars know, too, that both the Septuagint and the New Testament prefix I to the word, so that in the Old Testament Greek, both the Hebrew name YOHANAN and the Hebrew name YONA are represented by IOANNES; and in the New Testament, the name Jonah is rendered by both IONAS and IOANNES. Is there not, then, in these resemblances of words, both from the earlier Assyrian monuments and the later Babylonian historian, incidental proof, at least, of the entire naturalness of the narrative of Jonah at Nineveh?

Dr. Trumbull says again: "It would certainly seem to be true that if God desired to impress upon all the people of Nineveh the authenticity of a message from himself, while leaving to themselves the responsibility of a personal choice as to obeying or disregarding his message, he could not have employed a fitter method than by sending that message to them in a way calculated to meet their most reverent and profound conception of a divinely authorized messenger." It does surely seem most reasonable that Jonah's life should be miraculously saved from the storm just in the way it was, and not in a different way.

But another point should not be overlooked. That is, the bearing that these "modern discolorsures of Assyrian life and history," so happily applied by the writer just quoted, have on some other correlated matters.

One is, the added emphasis which these well known facts give to the Savior's statement: "Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites." He was, indeed, a startling sign to them. Considering their long and strongly rooted beliefs, and also the fact that Jonah's route in coming to them lay through experiences that just fitted into the mould of their beliefs, it is easy to see how they would be immediately and deeply affected by his visit and warning. He was a striking sign to them that he was from God; a sign of God's judgments, a sign of his mercy. So they might well fear him, and might also rightly cherish hope.

The fact that Jonah was a stranger, that he belonged to another country, that he was in rude garb, that he only cried one thing, was nothing to them comparatively. It was EVERY THING to them that he came out of the sea, as they held their chief god Dagan and successive avatars had come. This at once thrilled them. This whelmingly moved them to give instant and reverent heed to his message.

Another bearing of these inwrought Assyrian beliefs impinges on the argument of objectors to the miracle of Jonah. Some scholars, who readily accept as true the Bible record of miracles generally, yet are slow to accept the verity of the account in Jonah's case. They contend there is "seeming lack of sufficient reason" for such a miracle as his preservation in a great fish. There was no necessity for this, they say. His life might have been saved, and he returned to duty, by having the vessel that carried him driven back by contrary winds to the place of starting. Thus they avow their opinion.

And then they go on to point out an evident reasonableness in the case of other Bible miracles, which shows them to be clearly different from mere fables and myths and "lying wonders" of any age. They allow that these are ever super-natural, but never UNNATURAL. Citing the miraculous plagues of Egypt in proof, they contend that there was a special reason for the form, or character, of each one of them. Beginning at the first, which was a "stroke at the popular river god, and passing on up to a stroke at the royal sun-god in the heavens, and terminating with a stroke at the first-born, or priestly representative of the gods, in every house in Egypt, 'from the first-born of Pharaoh who sitteth upon the throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill, and all the (consecrated) first-born of cattle,' no one of these was a mere reasonless display of divine power." Each miraculous stroke, though a super-natural, was yet a reasonable, display of "the supremacy of the God of the Hebrews over the boasted gods of Egypt."

In like manner, too, after Pharaoh was subdued, and had granted release to captive Israel, whom God promised to bring out of bondage with a mighty hand, Moses was not directed to wave his rod high over the heads of the people in order that, after the fashion of stories in the Arabian Nights, they should be transported through the air, and set down in Canaan," but, having brought them to the borders of the Red Sea, God instructs "Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea, in order that its waters may divide, and make a pathway for the Hebrews; and again to stretch it out, in order that the waters may return for the deluging of the Egyptians."

And so of other Old Testament and all New Testament miracles. All those wrought by our Lord, (say objectors to the miracle of Jonah), are most reasonable in their supernaturalness. He never exerted almightiness unnecessarily, or uselessly. He never tried to impress people by the "silly marvel of making clay figures walk or fly; of turning stones into bread, or of killing naughty boys by a word or a wish." The purpose of his exercise of supernatural power was always apparent and most reasonable. This was ever true, whether he wrought a miracle "for the increase of food, for the healing of disease, for the restoration of life, or for the quieting of the disturbed elements of nature."

The objector thus claims that no other miracle recorded in the Scriptures is so seemingly unnecessary as this account of Jonah being swallowed by a fish, for here, they claim, there is no visible connection between the mode of his rescue and the purpose of it. And besides this, the same discreditor of Jonah avers that it is essentially improbable that the people of a large heathen city would be so soon, so deeply exercised by the simple religious message of an obscure foreign prophet. Hence he discards the miracle altogether.

But is it not clear that this whole class of scholars have been leaving out of view entirely all these undoubted facts of history about Assyrian beliefs and character. Taking these facts, however, into the account, as they surely ought to be, how plain it is to the unprejudiced, that, having such intense and superstitious inwrought beliefs, so mercurial a people as the Ninevites were, would, under the power of God's Spirit, be more surely exercised in the exact manner they were by one coming to them just as Jonah did—alive, and so directly out of the bosom of a fish in the sea.

The whole thing is suitable, reasonable, wonderful, just like a work of him "who only doeth wondrous things." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name?"

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
God treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.
"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
He is his own Interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

One lesson for us in closing is: In christian work among the unconverted aim at conviction. This is needed as a forerunner of conversion. In true repentance, grief over sin ever precedes turning from it. Whatever may have been Jonah's motive as he proclaimed his message in Nineveh, his words produced intense conviction, and this led to the turning of the whole populace to God. Thousands on the day of Pentecost, pricked in their heart for sin, with soul-filled anxiety asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and, being instructed, were soon rejoicing in the Lord. Fear not the sinner's conviction. A law-work in the heart often issues in great blessing, as in the case of these Ninevites.

Another lesson: believe God's word. Believe it implicitly, believe it fully. Believe it just as we have it. It is no harder to accept the miracle of Jonah than to accept that of the three men saved from the seven-times-heated flaming furnace without even the smell of fire upon them. No harder than to believe that a man four days dead should, at the authoritative call of the Son of Man, walk forth from his tomb, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and yet alive and well. No harder than to believe any other miracle. Accept them all. And if doubt ever tries to creep in, cry out with the distressed father pleading for his afflicted boy at the foot of the transfiguration-mount, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."

And once more: Trust God in obscurest providences. In all dark, surging, and billowy trials, ever hear his words of cheer:

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee o'erflow;
For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

Displeased

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said: I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.—Jonah 4:1-3.

My God! how fearful is the fight!
Within my heart two spirits wage;
One seeks alone thy heavenly light,
And every thought with thee t' engage.
The other scorns thy sovereign will,
And dares revolt against it still.

Oh, grace! Oh, ray of love benign!
Shed o'er my heart the balm of peace;
With thy benignant power divine
From thy dark foe my soul release,
And make this slave of death to be
A voluntary slave to thee.

—Racine.

DISPLEASED

Very unexpected, indeed, even surprising, is it to read next of Jonah's grief at God's mercy. It displeased him exceedingly, and he was very angry that God spared the Ninevites. Astounding! The modern christian heart, alive with missionary zeal, warm with love for souls, cannot understand it. For an evangelist, a preacher, a prophet of God, proclaiming God's own message to sinners till they deeply repent, and angels in heaven rejoice over them, while he, the favored winner of them, is so disappointed at the result that he sulks and complains over it, is certainly the strangest thing ever marring man's service of God.

Jonah's case is an anomaly. Pardoned himself, he is unwilling others should be. A late monument of God's mercy on his own repentance, his heart refuses mercy to penitent believers, as well as to innocent children, and even to dumb animals. Surely, the New Testament lesson, taught in the parable of the forgiven, but unforgiving, debtor, was most suitable for him then, as it is now for every one of like temper.

True, the words, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" and those other words, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath," were not breathed from heaven just in that form till seven centuries after Jonah's day. But long before he lived, God had given his charge through Moses: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, I am the Lord;" and through Solomon: "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me, I will render to the man according to his work." And besides this, the Lord himself, whom Jonah had declared to the startled sailors he feared, because he was "the Lord, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land," had sent him to Nineveh for the very purpose of bringing about the conversion of its people. That conversion has now marvellously taken place, but he, the chief instrument in its accomplishment, is grievously unsuited with it. "He is displeased exceedingly, and very angry." What he wished was the overthrow of the city. Not so much, perhaps, that he desired its destruction, as Israel's safety. His mind is mainly on his own people. Not foremost on Nineveh, at all, perhaps, but mainly on the land of his fathers. What will be best for God's heritage in Israel? That was the constant brooding of his heart.

Several things, doubtless, weighed upon his mind. He possibly thought of his own reputation. The thought, "if Nineveh is not destroyed I will be counted a false prophet," may have kept so ringing in his heart as to make him vengeful.

Or he may have been influenced by a commendable, though mistaken, zeal for God's glory. It probably looked to him as if God would be dishonored by not keeping his word, and overthrowing the city, according to the proclamation which he, as a prophet of the Lord, had been solemnly commissioned to declare.

But, doubtless, the main things moving him were, first, that he strongly shared with his own people generally, in the unfounded prejudice cherished against all Gentiles. This unworthy feeling led them to consider all the mercy shown by God to other nations as just so much mercy deducted from themselves.

And then, second, Jonah very probably considered Nineveh as a formidable enemy to his people, and, in that view, he wished for its destruction. Were it overthrown, as threatened, it would never become the oppressor of Israel. Already its people, and those of the country of which it was the capital, had crippled his country. They were still a constant menace to her on the north. And he may have known, or have had a strong presentiment, that they, if spared, were destined, sooner or later, to be the conquerors of the ten tribes, whom as a kingdom he loved. So he deeply regretted that he had been made a messenger of mercy to his beloved country's enemies. These enemies he wished destroyed rather than saved. For then, as he thought of it, his own people would be safe.

The third thing which so greatly exercised him was, probably, his cherished idea and hope that God's judgment inflicted on the Ninevites might be a warning that Israel would heed. He heartily wished to see his own people penitent and saved. And his notion was, that only some striking judgment of God on some neighboring nation would startle Israel from her present desperate degeneracy, and bring her back in penitence to God. All other means, so far, had failed to do this.

When, therefore, he proclaimed the downfall of Nineveh in forty days, the lively thought of his heart was that God was now about to give the example so much needed. But when mercy interposed, and Nineveh was spared, his cherished hope was blasted. He was greatly disappointed. Despairing of the reformation of Israel, he is utterly cast down. Entirely failing to grasp Jehovah's widely beneficent

and far-reaching purpose for his own people, and for the gentile world, too, he complains in peevishness and petulancy: "I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." As much as to say: 'This is about what I expected. I knew thy character of mercy and long-suffering; knew it when I was called the first time. So I tried to get away. I fled before I should come into such an emergency. I anticipated just such a result as this, and escaped beforehand to avoid it. I did not wish to declare from the mouth of the Lord that the city should fall within forty days, and then have my words prove false. Neither did I desire my beloved people to lose the lesson of thy severe judgment on Nineveh, nor yet, to have Nineveh spared to be Israel's future oppressor. I cannot bear the thought of this. So, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me.'

Wretched man! His words are fearful. Such boldness before God, while himself so grievously wrong, is appalling. "It is awful," says Cowles, "that a sinner, plucked himself as a brand from the burning, should object to God's showing the same mercy to his fellow sinners. Why did he not rather rejoice and shout for joy, when he saw the king and people of Nineveh on their faces before God—his warning pressing them effectually to repentance, and the clouds of gathering vengeance swept away by the hand of love?" Instead of this, however, he complains, and asks that his life shall end. But how could he think himself prepared to die in such a temper? His request is rash, most thoughtless, petulant and wicked.

What shall the answer of God to such presumption and glaring irreverence be? Hear how gentle it is. In dignity and self-control it is high above all human reproof of sin. "Doest thou well to be angry?" That was all God said then. How wonderful the divine patience! The question only gently hints reproof—"you do not well to be angry."

Instead of a direct charge, however, the words simply ask Jonah to judge himself. Their import is: 'Look at the case all round. Marvellous mercy has lately been shown you. It is the divine character, too, as you have just acknowledged, to show mercy to penitents. Therefore, frankly, in your own opinion, is it becoming for you, under the circumstances, to be angry?' In majesty and lofty kindness God spake in substance only that.

Years later our Lord reproved James and John for their proposal of punishment upon some who refused to receive him. God now, by his mild interrogation, suggests to Jonah his anger is much amiss. Yet it is to be carefully noted; the divine reproof is not against the prophet's strong desire for the good of Israel, but that his feeling is so turned against the Ninevites. He might love his own people passionately. He ought to. But no hatred of others ought to be cherished. Only hatred of sin is excusable. Moses' anger was right when he broke the first tables of the law, for his feelings then rose in horror against the sin of making the golden calf.

In like cases christians may be angry and sin not. If they are angry, not with men, but with the sins of men; if they persecute, not men, but the vices of men; their anger is right, their zeal is good. But if they are angry, not with sins, but with men, their passion is ungod-like, and their zeal most faulty. It becometh each minister and christian worker, then, to be always watchful, and whenever irritably exercised, to hear from heaven the heart-probing question: "Dost thou well to be angry?"

In the case before us, Jonah seems to have made no answer to the Lord's gentle rebuke, but to have continued still sullen and hard hearted.

We are to understand that he is still in the city. There he might have stayed and done good. There were penitent people all about him. Doubtless, too, the Ninevites were disposed to treat him well—even hospitably. Moreover, the mass of them were in such a subdued, inquiring mood, his remaining among them might have been very helpful, as he mingled with them endeavoring to confirm them in their good purposes, and to instruct them in the truths and worship of God. But he was not the strong, evenly balanced, and faithful man, to rise to such an occasion.

He may have, indeed, received some intimation that the city would be spared. He at least inferred it, as he says, from what he well knew of the merciful character of God towards true penitents. That the overthrow would be averted he really believed, and yet in a measure seems to have doubted. What curious bedfellows then occupied his heart. Snuggling side by side were faith and doubt where only one at a time can usally lie. So far did he doubt the city's preservation that he is unwilling to venture to stay in it, lest he may perish in its overthrow. Yet so far did he believe it would be spared, that he is already exceedingly displeased with God for his mercy.

Silenced, however, by the gentle, yet heart-probing inquiry of his Lord; unwilling, apparently, to associate with the mourning populace, he hurries away, as if he meant to "shake off the dust of his feet as a testimony against them."

But the place he sought was not distant. He only went to a hill top outside the limits, perhaps the highest near by, from which he could see well over the city, and behold its overthrow should it occur. Forty days, however, are going to be a long time to endure the intense sun-heat of that summer sky. So, he "there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city"—as if this question were still in suspense. Strange! strange! to us having the whole Bible, and with our modern floods of christian light, passing strange, surely, was this poor man's posture of mind! None at present can fully understand his motive or feelings.

Can it be supposed he thought: 'possibly the Lord will hear my prayer and expostulation, and will turn again to execute his first sentence of destruction?' Or shall we conceive that he construed the Lord's question, thus—"Doest thou well to be angry so soon?" 'Have you waited long enough yet to see the result?—long enough to be sure of what I am going to do?' Or, was his course sufficiently accounted for by the fact that he knew, from God's past method of procedure, that chastening judgments often followed, even when sin had been repented of, as in David's case when reproved by Nathan?

Whatever may have most influenced him, he is evidently now in a pitiably mixed state of mind and heart. In spite of all God's late mercies, and marvellous dealings with him; in spite of his own penitence and prayer which gained him deliverance from death in the fish; in spite, too, of the fact that after his rescue, he had been recalled, and had boldly delivered God's message to the Ninevites,—in spite of all this, and more, he is now in a great conflict. The law in his members is warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is yet in him. Still far from being filled with the Spirit; far from glad acquiescence in God's will as to Nineveh; rather expecting the city to be saved, yet hoping it may fall, he stays outside, at a convenient distance to see the outcome.

There, while he is wretchedly putting in a period of time, we may view his surroundings, peek inside a little at the somber man, and pick up what practical lessons may appear.

The place he chose for his tent was on the east side of the city. We are told he went out in that direction. Coming on his mission

from Gath-Hepher, he would approach Nineveh on its west, or southwest, side. Already have we seen that as soon as he entered its portals he began his cry of warning. Advancing through the heart of the city, he may have passed entirely to its opposite suburb, or nearly so, in the one day he preached. So that now, when he decides to await the issue, it would be natural for him to go on eastward. There, on an elevation, choosing a spot suiting his purpose, he built his temporary home.

The record tells us this was a booth. And it is learned from other sources that a booth is a small, temporary structure made of twigs and leafy branches of trees. It was so openly formed as to admit the air and wind, but close and compact enough to keep out the direct rays of the sun, and furnish a pleasant shade. Shelters like this were occupied by the Children of Israel each year, for one week, during the feast of tabernacles, or harvest home. The purpose of such a leafy bower was to add to comfort by providing protection from the excessive heat. In addition to this, however, in this case of Jonah, the booth was soon converted into a school house and a sanctuary. God made it a "school of discipline to give him more enlightened views."

Unwillingly there receiving his wonderful lesson, who would not pity him? Like home-sickness at college, or in the army, a similar dreadful feeling had seized upon the pitiable man, and held him in a grip he thought he could not throw off. The chief trouble was he did not want to throw it off, and so tried not. He hugged the ugly nightmare to his bosom; nursed it into more and more life, till he began to think he would rather die than live. He even prayed to God to take away his life. But the poor man was self-deceived. He did not know his own heart. He really did not want to die then. Else why didn't he stay in Nineveh, and perish in the overthrow he was expecting for it? No, Jonah knew well that God would not answer that prayer, and take away his life. So he prayed it. But his words did not express the sincere desire of his heart, as when he formerly cried from his entombment in the fish. From one in so exceedingly sorry a mood withhold pity who can?

And yet he was guilty, very guilty. Well may we earnestly seek that none of us shall ever be left to come into such a sad state of mind and heart before heaven, and our fellow men, as the one we now contemplate.

This, then, is something of the character belonging to that perverse scholar, in that summer booth, on that Assyrian hill top, well

on towards three-thousand years ago. And this may be considered one of the practical lessons taught by this part of the narrative. Whilst not excusing the man's inexcusable naughtiness, be sorry for him in his pitiable mood.

But another thing suggested by the story is: Unfortunately inconsistent people may often do good. This was true of Jacob and of Jonah, as well as of Peter and of Silas. The good, however, that may at any time go out from such people, does not at all excuse their inconsistencies. It makes it the more lamentable that these exist, and the more important that they should be cured. When good is done by a weak and faulty brother or sister, then proof is apparent "that the excellency of the power is of God and not of man." The Lord does not bless any worker's inconsistencies, though he may often bless his own truth handled by such a worker,—may even bless, the parts of the worker's conduct that are exemplary. Much better, however, would it be, if all faultiness was gotten rid of. Each should earnestly strive and pray against all in his own conduct that, in any measure, may be likened to "a fly in the ointment of the apothecary."

A third lesson is: Those who in sullen mood desire death, are generally the least prepared for it. Jonah's posture of mind and heart wholly unfitted him to appear before God on high. Most suicides are the worst kind of murderers. Some, it is true, are unbalanced in mind, greatly to be pitied, and should have harsh judgment withheld in their case. But it is to be feared that the majority are guilty of most terrible wickedness. May God graciously give a different mind to any and all who allow themselves to be wretchedly tempted to self-murder.

Moreover, farther, gloominess is often our own fault. Not seldom we beget for ourselves uneasiness, low spirits, and worry. Jonah's unhappiness followed naturally from his own unwisdom and rebellion. His mind was set on his own ways. Not on the Lord's. Hence darkness and disappointment overtook him. Each servant of Christ should ever watchfully guard against sowing folly, so that he may not be compelled to reap the bitter fruits.

But another shade of the same lesson is: Pride and anger are blinding. They render people quite incapable of perceiving the most glaring absurdities in their own conduct, and dispose them to vindicate the most daring rebellions. Obtuse, at such a time, to their own faults, they think the wrong is all in others. Jonah even blamed God. He did not see himself at all as he really was, and could not while in that frame of mind.

Nor was his an isolated case. Like specimens have appeared in every age, and may be found to-day. Often very inconsistent themselves such persons seem totally blind to the fact, while they are worried and upset generally over other people and their ways. To such people, a sincere friend, wishing their betterment, can hardly, with profit, venture to drop a kindly word of caution or advice. It being clear, in most cases, that the chief fault is in the fault-finder, about all that often can be done is to let him alone, with the hearty prayer that the Spirit of Light would soon reveal to him his unfortunate self. Well may every christian seek to be delivered from such a blinded and self-ignorant state. Each should ever bear in mind his own large need of the pardoning mercy, the atoning blood, and the new-creating Spirit of the Living God.

But a closing important lesson is: Never scold at Divine Providence. If we could alter our Heavenly Father's way, it could not be for the better—only for the worse. Jonah's plan was far inferior to God's. It called for the destruction of vast hordes of dumb brutes; for the destroying, also, of one hundred and twenty thousand as yet unsinning little children; and with these, for the destruction of hundreds of thousands of truly penitent adults. He would have all this take place by the withholding of God's mercy, and would have the divine judgment fall in spite of Nineveh's penitence.

Jonah's plan was one of vengeance; God's one of mercy. Jonah proposed by a judgment on Nineveh to frighten Israel to repentance; God's way was by the sparing of Nineveh to teach Israel, first, the inexcusableness of their own impenitency, and the certainty of their ruin if they did not turn from their sin; and second, that repenting Nineveh was more worthy of God's favor than apostate Israel. God knew that the tidings of Nineveh's penitency and rescue would be far more fitted to recall Israel to his service than the news of its overthrow.

And besides this, God also meant, by the preservation of that Gentile city on its repentance, to furnish a lesson of hope to the penitent, and of condemnation to those amid outward privileges impenitent, to all people in after times to all ages. Jonah's mind did not grasp this, nor in any measure foresee it. Nor did he foresee how the Messiah, eight-hundred years later, would thus apply this very history. So his proposed change in the divine procedure would not only be a vast blunder, but also most derogatory to the character of the Great Ruler over all.

But the reach of the divine plan was vastly wider still. God gave Israel a lesson in love. But Israel did not profit by it, and willingly return to his service. So she, as a nation, was overthrown, and carried away into captivity. But even that was not an unmitigated evil. Jonah, outcast, was much honored of God in doing good in this heathen city. So Israel's outcast condition would not hinder her serving God's cause through every one of her people who remained faithful. This was so of many in Babylon. Ezekiel, Daniel and others were shining lights among those who had carried them away captive, and who knew not Jehovah. So were Ezra and Nehemiah and not a few like them at a later day. And still later, the Jews, scattered in all lands, as witnesses for the true God, pioneered the way for christianity, so that it spread more rapidly than we can conceive of it doing in any other way. It was all of God's gracious overruling and mercy.

The lesson is, we need to beware lest in dark exigencies of life, we become guilty of Jonah's sin of murmuring against a kind Providence, and peevishly wishing a change. Our way would be a way far inferior to our Heavenly Father's who seeth the end from the beginning, and who ever doeth all things well.

No human being, however wise, can govern God's world better than God himself. Amazingly short sighted and presumptuous would he be who proposed to try it, as virtually does every one who quarrels with providential procedure. The dire need in every case is, by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, to have our human wills brought into sweet subjection to the blessed Divine will. Then we will not repine as Jonah. Then our rejoicing will be ever in the Lord. Then however dark be our trials, we will sing with the utterly lonely, the blind and palsied Schmolck, after the loss of his home by fire, and the death of his wife and all his children:

My Jesus, as thou wilt!
O may thy will be mine;
Into thy hand of love
I would my all resign.
Through sorrow, or through joy,
Conduct me as thine own; .
And help me still to say,
My Lord, thy will be done, Amen.

Disciplined.

And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day and it smote the gourd that it withered.—Jonah 4:6, 7.

Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.—Hebrews 12:6.

Many christians are like chestnuts—very pleasant nuts, but enclosed in very prickly burs, which need various dealings of Nature, and her grip of frost before the kernel is disclosed.—Horace Smith.

Often when God sees how the sand, (of love of the earth and of our own ways), is keeping us from rising into the pure and stimulating atmosphere of the higher life, he takes it out of us by some providential dispensation.—Senex Smith.

DISCIPLINED

The training was by an Expert—a Drill-Master unequaled—a Disciplinarian using skill par excellence—a Teacher whose work is always masterful.

The place of training was in a leafy bower just outside of Assyria's capital. There over two thousand six hundred years ago, a naughty scholar was taught. There he found his summer school.

The booths of the Children of Israel in the wilderness were the first and original Chautauqua. In these early tabernacles, the same Teacher as now met with, instructed, and guided an assembly of tardy learners. This frail tent near Nineveh was a later. and yet, back from the present, a really ancient "hall in the grove."

The school held in it, however, differed from modern institutes not a little. It was not prepared for with long and careful arranging. It was not widely advertised beforehand—not advertised at all. It was but meagerly attended. Yet, out from it went such hallowed influences, as have been a blessing to the world ever since, and as will be sure to go on with cumulating power for good as long as truth needs to be taught, and scholars need to learn it.

Yes, summer schools now-a-days are, in most points, very different from this one in Assyria eight-hundred years before Christ. Often, at the present, instructor and pupil are very much alike in desire, purpose, and plan, even in disposition. In this long-ago case they were as dissimilar as wisdom and folly, holiness and sin. The scholar was human, the Teacher was divine. The scholar was self-willed, rash; unreasonable, provoking; the Teacher patient, benignant, wise. The scholar easily gave way to his feelings; the Teacher had infinite self control. The scholar is churlish, sullen, fault-finding, speaks unadvisedly with his lips, even complains of the Master's methods in an outspoken, inexcusable way; while the Master's reproof and exposition are marked by the utmost gentleness and forbearance, as he wisely proceeds to give just the lessons then most needed. The scholar was not there simply on his summer vacation—to get rest and benefit together, but for a blame-worthy purpose—to see the near-by city overthrown; the Teacher came, not for financial gain, but solely to do good to the sole pupil, to the pupil's people, and to all others for all time. The scholar's name was Jonah; the Teacher's name was God.

The method of the Great Teacher that day well deserves study. He taught by object lesson and orally; by symbol and in direct terms; by argument and by inference. His plan was to correct and instruct the lone scholar by an acted parable, in which the scholar himself should bear a chief part. Hence in rapid succession there follow each other the Teacher's tender expostulation, the brisk springing up of the shade-producing gourd, its quick withering away, the burning wind from the desert, the complaining wail of the fainting scholar, and, close following, the masterly interpretation and application of the parable by the Infinite Teacher.

The first step, while Jonah was yet in the city, it would seem, was gentle expostulation. "Doest thou well to be angry?" As much as to say: 'Is it needful, or nice, for you to be so grieved in heart, and so gloomy over this affair with Nineveh? Is not the trouble mainly in you?'

The Teacher wished the scholar to look at self. Kindly he would hold up before him the picture of his own peevish heart, so discomposed and unreasonable in its complainings and impatient wishes. In the frame of mind then present, Jonah was altogether overlooking the good done, and counting as of little consequence the glory of the Divine goodness and mercy. So the Great Instructor patiently, but sincerely, expostulates with him.

He, however, seems to have made no reply, but rather very soon to have gone out of the city, and built a booth for shelter while he waited. There the Divine Master followed him,—there took his second step in discipline. In surprising kindness he caused a rapid-growing gourd to spring up, and furnish a still denser shade "over (Jonah's) head to deliver him from his grief."

Eastern travelers tell us this gourd-tree was the castor-oil plant, which grew rapidly to the height of ten or twelve feet. Its botanical name is *RECINUS*. But because of its very large leaf it is generally called the palm-christ, that is, the palm of Christ. It had but one leaf on a branch, but as it had many branches, and each leaf was over a foot in diameter, the whole number furnished a fine shelter from the heat. The verse says: "The Lord God prepared it." That is, for one thing, he "appointed" it. It doubtless also means, he caused its naturally rapid growth to be miraculously hastened. It "came up in a night."

We are, however, not at all to suppose that our Lord CREATED the plant for the occasion. The words do not so mean. The approved

thought is that he chose for his present special purpose that which already existed in nature, and exerted increased almighty power on it, so that it reached maturity much quicker than usual.

This, in fact, is the mode of nearly all the Divine Worker's miracles. They resemble, though they exceed, what men call nature,—that is, what is ordinarily seen to take place. Calvin well states the thought when he says: "We know that God, when he does any thing beyond the (ordinary) course of nature, does, nevertheless, come near to nature in his working; he does outdo the (usual) course of nature, and yet does not desert it altogether." And then he adds: "In this case (of Jonah's gourd) I do not doubt that God chose a plant which would quickly grow up even to such a height as this, and yet, that he surpassed the wonted course of nature" in causing it to "come up in a night."

Our Lord did not forsake the course of nature when he turned the water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. Trench on the miracles quotes Augustine as happily saying: The Lord Jesus was then "working in the line of, (above, indeed, but not across or contrary to) his more ordinary workings, which we see daily around us,—the unnoticed miracles of every day nature." "He made wine that day at the marriage, * * * who every year makes it in the vines. For as what the servants had put into the water-pots was turned into wine by the working of the Lord, so, too, what the clouds pour forth is turned into wine by the working of the same Lord. This, however, we do not wonder at, because it happens every year; its frequency has made it cease to be a marvel." The ordinary very quick growth of the palm-christ, does not surprise us, because this is no new thing. But when God brings such a plant to its full size in a few hours, we call it a miracle.

Most beneficent was the divine PURPOSE in working thus in this case. For then, after a single night, the full grown plant threw out its grateful shade over Jonah's head. It must have been timely, for the verse says: "He was exceeding glad of the gourd."

This was the second step in the Great Teacher's plan of instruction and discipline in the unique case we are now considering.

But the third step was not tardy. "God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered." In a very little while its dense shade was gone. It came up with marvellous swiftness, and perished as soon. Again employing natural means and accelerating them, the Lord God used a worm—the deadly enemy of the *RECINUS*. It so wounds the root of the plant that it withers at once.

Or, perhaps, the insect is to be thought of in the collective sense, as we speak of "the fly," or "the weevil" in the grain. A traveler writes: "On warm days, when a small rain falls, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which, in one night, so often and so suddenly cut off its leaves that only their ribs remain, which I have often observed with much wonder, as though it were a copy of that destruction of old at Nineveh." At any rate, whether by worm at the root, or by myriads on the leaves, the deadly work is quickly wrought and the comforting shadow is no more. It was God who did it. He prepared the worm. He is working all along, and working wondrously.

Note his next step. It introduces a condition almost unendurably worse for the recreant waiter. "It came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and asked for his life to die." The poor man is in a sorrowful plight, indeed. Layard says: "Few European travelers can brave the perpendicular rays of an Assyrian sun." But besides this Jonah felt the wilting power of this "hot, stormy, and singularly relaxing and dispiriting" east wind. Violence, however, is not always an accompaniment of such a simoon. In the margin of our Bibles the word vehement is translated "silent." The revised version reads "sultry," which is probably the true meaning. Thomson, in his "Land and Book," writes "We have two kinds of sirocco, one accompanied by vehement wind which fills the air with dust and fine sand." The other "is of the quiet kind, and often more overpowering than the other. There is no living thing abroad to make a noise. The birds hide in the thickest shades. The fowls pant under the walls with open mouth and drooping wings. The flocks and herds take shelter in caves and under great rocks. The laborers retire from the fields, and close the windows and doors of their houses. While travelers hasten, as I did, to take shelter in the first cool place they can find. No one has energy enough to make a noise, and the very air is too weak and languid to stir the pendent leaves of the tall poplars." The Apostle James, in his letter, chapter two, eleven, speaks of the occurrence of such a quiet, sultry, "burning heat" in the very early part of the day as the usual time for it.

Such as this we are to think of as that which came upon Jonah with so great power that he well nigh succumbed. He prayed to be allowed to die. As the mind has power over the body, so often has the body great power over the mind. Jonah's gloomy mental state

was no doubt much intensified by the physical strain he was enduring. The sixth verse says God meant the shadow of the gourd to "deliver him from his grief." And it did cheer him. He "was exceeding glad of the gourd."

But now that, not only is its grateful shade gone, but the sirocco has also come, "like the breath of a great furnace," he loses all strength and courage. "He fainted, and wished in himself to die." Literally, "He asked for his life to die." The meaning seems to be that the prophet, recognizing that his life is not his own, but God's, asked for it as a gift or boon, that he might do with it what he pleased,—his desire being that, with God's permission, it should be given to death.

In such a wish Jonah may have had before him the cases of Moses and Elijah, each of whom, in utter weariness of life, uttered the same prayer for death, but each with better cause and with nobler spirit. No one of the three, however, attempts to take his own life. Each felt he dare not do that. His life was not his own. It was entrusted to him by God, only to be given up at God's bidding, or in accordance with his will.

If Jonah was thinking of Elijah, who lived not so many years before him, he ought to have remembered how very different their cases were. True, in some things, they were alike. Both were weary of life. Both wished to die. Both expressed their wish in the same words. But here the resemblance ends. Elijah's was a noble disappointment; Jonah's an unworthy one. Elijah thought his mission fruitless, Jonah saw his successful. To Elijah all his preaching, miracles, toil, and sufferings seemed to be in vain, and to add to his people's guilt. Jonah saw God's kingdom extended even to the heathen world, and should have rejoiced for that. Elijah grieved because he had failed in his efforts to convert and save Israel. Jonah because he succeeded in converting and saving Nineveh.

The more we look at Jonah, the more we feel sorry for him, and at the same time the less we feel like framing excuse for his conduct. His prayer to die, and his averment: "It is better for me to die than to live," is each really a complaint against God, who is dealing with him in a most lofty and merciful way.

The acted parable here ends. But the infinitely wise and patient Teacher soon hastens to apply the lesson of it. His next step is a repetition of his former expostulation. "Doest thou well to be angry?" he again tenderly asks. But this time he narrows his question to a single issue. "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" And

Jonah, in his unreasoning irritation, accepts and answers the inquiry on that one issue, and thus unwittingly prepares the way for the unanswerable argument of Jehovah which follows.

A literal translation here reads: "Art thou rightly angry for the palm-christ?" Jonah replies: "I am rightly angry, (and that) unto death." As much as to say: "My anger is so great that it well nigh kills me, and even in that excess it is justified by the circumstances."

Plain it is that he is yet far from being subdued. He seems determined to nurse his despondent feelings, and false views, and not let them leave him. Well for him was it, and well for us it is, that the Great Teacher "knoweth us altogether"—knoweth our frame, and remembereth how frail we are. This only will account for the wonderful display of the divine patience that day.

But the next step will still more fully show the divine forbearance and love. God now graciously condescends to argue the case with his caviling servant. Would he have spared the gourd merely for his own convenience and refreshment? and was he angry and rebellious when it withered, though it was not his work or property; though it had cost him no labor; and though it was naturally of a swift growth and a withering nature? Yes, he would do this: and was it not right that the Lord should spare Nineveh, in which were so large a number of his creatures, rational and irrational, formed by himself, in the display of his loving power, and for the purposes of his glory? If all the people of that city, who are capable of knowing good from evil, without one exception, were deserving of the severest punishment, and ripe for vengeance, yet there were no less than one hundred and twenty thousand infants there, incapable of "knowing their right hand from their left," who were as yet free from actual sins, and would Jonah find fault with Jehovah for sparing the city for their sakes? Must all these innocent ones suffer without mercy? Then, too, there was also very much cattle in the city, and God must have regard for these as far more valuable than a withering gourd.

So the Lord loftily argues. His words set out vegetable life on the one hand, and animal life on the other—a shrub against a babe or a lamb. For the shrub Jonah had done nothing to enlist his sympathies. But God implies that HE has made all these infants and lambs, too, to grow; and that he has been watching over them with a Father's tender care, and so has good reason to be deeply interested in their well being.

Jonah is met on his own ground. His thought rises no higher

than mere human sentiment; his concern reaches no farther than to a mere thing of the world which soon passes away. The higher, moral ground he totally omits. Hence God leaves out of his expostulation all reference to the repentance of the Ninevites, and condescends to argue with the captious prophet only on the lower ground. "Shall not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" If Jonah has pity on a single plant, so short-lived and easily withered, surely the Lord God will show compassion to the thousands of never dying souls, and the other thousands of unsinning dumb animals in Nineveh. Not bringing into consideration at all, at the time, the divine and ever unfailing mercy for penitents, the whole condescending reasoning of the Lord goes to show Jonah to be very wrong in heart to fret and murmur as he did.

This, then, is the main lesson given to that unwilling scholar by the wisest of Teachers, in that self-built booth, on that far past day.

The account suddenly ends. But the very abruptness of its close is more strikingly suggestive than if the thought had been followed out in detail. Jonah had nothing more to say. There was nothing he could properly say in excuse for his conduct. On the other hand, there are reasons for thinking that the whole truth all at once now flashed upon him; that he saw himself deeply criminal for being so much concerned about his own ease, comfort, and credit, and so unconcerned about the honor of God and the benefit of his creatures. There is reason to suppose that he was now fully silenced and humbled and learned true submission; and that, being made to know the evil of his own heart, he was soon prepared to serve God in the prophetic office, with greatly more humility and propriety than he had ever done before.

These inferences seem allowable, first; from the fact that he writes the whole account in detail without a word of excuse for himself. Then, second: His prayer, contained in the second chapter of his book, put in written form after this date, is strongly suggestive of a pious mind, under a severe trial of faith. And third: Our Saviour mentions Jonah as a prophet, and as a type of himself. See his words in both Matthew and Luke.

But, stayed here in our study by the sudden closing of the narrative, we may well yet linger a little longer with a few lessons for ourselves.

One is that of the soul's value. Even cattle are worth more than gourds. The soul is worth infinitely more still. For the sake

of ten righteous people God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah from dire destruction. The grass of the field which, though so insignificant and evanescent, is yet clothed by God with surpassing beauty, is referred to by our Lord as an undoubted proof that the Creator of All will care for the unspeakably more precious bodies and souls of men who are to live forever. One soul is of more value than the whole world. Much more, then, surely, is it more priceless than sparrows, or lilies, or castor-beans.

The point of the comparison in our story is: the need that Jonah had for the foliage of the gourd a type of the need God's cause had for repentant Nineveh. As the shadow of the gourd just then was necessary for Jonah's comfort—almost for his life—so now, since Nineveh as a city fears God, and turns to him, his cause needs it—needs the lesson of its pardon and preservation—and would suffer if the lesson was spoiled by the city's overthrow. The honor of his eternal character as a merciful God demanded the sparing of Nineveh when penitent, infinitely more than Jonah's temporary need called for the sparing of that wide-spreading palm-christ with its grateful shadow. Souls are to live for ever. Gourd-shades are evanescent as the morning dew. So immortal souls infinitely excel in worth.

But again; How quick-fading often are human joys and comforts. It takes but little to wither our gourds. A worm, or the east wind, may do it in an hour. All mere earthly blessings are:

“Like snow flakes on life's river,
A moment seen, then gone forever.”

Then why is the heart so much set on them? Discontents, murmurs, contentions, and despondings are all too common, and often are about such trifles that the cause of them needs only mention in order to complete exposure. The Lord takes from us what was never properly our own, and was not likely to continue with us, as this bean-stalk over Jonah. He sends, or permits, a little pain, or reproach, instead of everlasting misery and contempt, and we think we “do well to be angry,” and even break our hearts with impatience. So we speak and act as if our grief were inconsolable and our wound incurable.

Some even rashly wish for death when in so rebellious a frame of mind. All these things are inexcusably bad and reprehensible. Deep down in our hearts it should be remembered and felt that when our gourds are gone our God is not gone. Gourds grow rapidly, and fade as soon. God is from everlasting to everlasting. Gourds hurry hence.

God waits to be gracious. His mercy endureth forever. The mother may forsake her sucking child, but the Lord will not forget thee, O down-hearted child of his. His ringing word is: "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand, thy walls are continually before me." Why, then, be so grieved over worldly joys and comforts that are often so short lived?

And this suggests a third lesson,—“Hope thou in God.” “Delight thyself also in him.” He is thine everlasting portion. He will maintain thy lot, and, in his own time, give thee an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. When he withers our gourds it is for our good. He means us thereby to learn that he alone is the durable portion of our souls. And it is when we come to realize this that we are first blest with the “rest of faith.” “We who have believed do enter into rest.” This is the way to live. Here lies the secret of life’s content and joy. In this experience and assurance each soul may find at once sustaining peace. Sincerely and ever, then, its song may be—

“Though waves and storms go o’er my head,
Though strength and health and friends be gone,
Though joys be withered all and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn,
On this my steadfast soul relies;
Father, thy mercy never dies.

Fixed on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail, and flesh decay,
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth’s foundations melt away;
Mercy’s full power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.”

The Purpose of it All

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.—Jonah 3:2.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
—Mark 16:15.

Church of our God! arise and shine,
Bright with the beams of truth divine;
Then shall thy radiance stream afar,
Wide as the heathen nations are.

—William Shrubsole.

O light of Zion, now arise!
Let the glad morning bless our eyes,
Earth's millions catch the kindling ray,
And hail the splendor of the day.

—Leonard Bacon.

XVII.

THE PURPOSE OF IT ALL

Perowne shows that the book of Jonah is a well defined drama. To see this to be true is not hard. A little study soon makes clear that the story is cast in dramatic mould. There are three distinct parts, or movements, which may properly be called Acts. Each follows the other naturally; compliments it exactly. The successive unfolding of these three Acts heightens the interest, and cumulates the instruction to the end. Each, as well as the whole, which they together make up, is clearly the work of a Master's hand.

Turning our thought to the first movement, or Act, several things clearly appear. First, the central figure is Jonah himself. Second, the theme, or subject, is his conversion. Third, the several scenes in the Act are, the Flight, the Storm, the Trial by the Ship's Crew, the Casting Overboard, the Prayer, and the Deliverance. Fourth, the words at the beginning, and those at the end of the Act are very similar. "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying: Arise, go to Nineveh,—But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying: Arise, go unto Nineveh. * * * So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." The prophet is a changed man. Self-willed and refractory at the opening of the Act; at its close he is submissive and obedient, but not yet fully consecrated, as the sequel soon shows.

Passing to the second Act, we find attention directed almost exclusively to "that great city" Nineveh. The absorbing theme here is the repentance and salvation of its myraid people. The city, great in populace and importance; vast in wealth, magnificence and area, which fancy can easily fill in with parks and vineyards and gardens and crowded marts, humble dwellings and royal palaces, stands vividly before us. In quick and life-like succession, scene follows upon scene.

First, a lone and humble-garbed stranger enters Nineveh. He comes "as a voice crying," not in the wilderness, but in the city. We watch for his deeds, and listen for his words, but see no act except his deliberate and persevering advance through the city, and we hear only his one earnest, and oft repeated cry, "Yet forty days and Nineveh, overthrown." This is the first scene in this Act.

The next soon follows. Thousands are in sackcloth. Even the

king puts aside his robe, and sits in ashes. In every part of the city lamentation, mourning and woe abound. As in Israel afterwards, "All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone." Fasting replaces feasting. Even the herds and flocks are made to show signs of the general sorrow and humiliation. All business halts. All pleasure is stayed. The whole city becomes "one vast temple of penitence and prayer."

Then, quickly succeeding this scene follows the next, and last of this Act. The people's prayer is heard. Their penitence prevails. Their homes are spared. "The stream of their life, purified and renewed, returns to its accustomed course. The cloud that hung threateningly over their city is dispersed, and the sun shines forth upon it again." "And God saw their work that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them: and he did it not." Deeply absorbing is the moral grandeur and impressiveness of all this.

But the highest point of the teaching is not yet reached. There is another section of the history before the end comes. This forms the third Act of the triple series. And as in the first Act, so here in this last, the chief character is again the prophet himself.

Behold him first, "displeased exceedingly" at the outcome of his mission; irritated and complaining, weary of life, and praying that he may die. View him next awaiting outside the city, in a booth he had there built on the hill side, that in it he might shelter him from the sun's burning rays, while, with evil eye, he watches the fortunes of the city, which he really wished overthrown. Behold him "exceeding glad" of the gourd, which God mercifully caused to grow in a night to shield him from the scorching heat, and, soon again, vexed and angry even unto death when the plant suddenly withered, and its welcome shade was gone. Look at him once more with no less interest, as the lofty argument of Jehovah, contrasting the perverse man's murmurs over mere shortlived plant, with the blessedly divine and exalted compassion over the populous city of Nineveh, convinces him of his grievous error, and completely silences all his complainings.

These four, quick following each other in this final Act, or section of the book, are lively scenes portrayed with the same brevity and vigor as before. All the movements in the history form one grand drama, having a single lofty and overtowering purpose, and at the same time, very clearly, several subordinate and minor ends.

One interesting and real, but secondary, design of the book becomes

clear by looking into the New Testament. There, as a previous chapter has shown, we find our Lord regarding Jonah as a type of himself. He declared: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall also the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

By these words Jesus would teach his hearers and all people to see in the story of Jonah, for one thing, "a historical parable—a prophecy in act."

Undoubtedly, then, since such a Teacher so taught, we may hold this to be one of the undeniable, yet subordinate, ideas of the book,—Jonah typical of Christ—Jonah prefiguring Christ, in his burial especially, and also in various other clear resemblances. Jonah was low and friendless among his hearers on ship-board and in Nineveh. So was Christ in Judea, and wherever he went. Jonah was voluntarily a victim to death, (as the sailors thought), for sin—his own sin. So Christ was a victim to real death in the room of those whose sins he had voluntarily taken on himself. The sacrifice of Jonah brought calm and safety to the endangered seamen; so the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross brought spiritual calm and eternal salvation to countless millions who received him, and will yet receive him, as their Substitute. As Jonah was entombed three days and three nights in the bosom of the fish; so Christ lay just as long in the heart of the earth. As Jonah was, on the third day, miraculously rescued from threatened death; so was Christ, after an equal period, miraculously raised from real death. As Jonah went forth from his living prison to preach to the Ninevites; so our Lord, after his resurrection, went forth not in his own person, but yet in his mystical body, the church—through the agency of his people—to preach the gospel in all the world. As Jonah's entombment and delivery gave weight to his message; so Christ's death and resurrection are the only foundation for repentance and salvation. And for hope, too. For as God's mercy in restoring Jonah, who deserved death, gave the Ninevites hope of mercy for themselves; so Christ's resurrection assures all sinners that God is now fully reconciled to man by Christ's death as man's Sin-offering and Substitute. His giving of himself a Ransom imparts assured efficacy to true repentance and hope. Hear it all may, in the ringing word of inspiration: "He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and remission of sins."

In all these points did Jonah prefigure Christ. Our Lord, however, seems to emphasize the central three—the burial, the resurrection

and his after mission. With the mind fast fixed on these, the pregnant words of Paul may be cherished as summing up both the subordinate and the main teachings of the book, when he declares to Agrippa and the rest, that the very essence of the instruction of Moses and the prophets, (Jonah among them,) is: "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people (of Israel), and to the Gentiles."

The second part of this inspired affirmation of the Apostle, just quoted, to-wit, that Christ, after having suffered and risen again, "should show light * * * * unto the Gentiles," suggests the MAIN and LEADING PURPOSE of Jonah's prophecy. Over and above several varied and secondary teachings of the book towers forth this high, central thought—THE CALL OF THE GENTILES INTO THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD.

As already stated in a previous chapter, the plain narrative in this short book of what God did in sending Jonah to preach to the Ninevites is but a fore-gleam of his lofty, world wide and heaven born purpose for the future. The gospel, at that early day given to the people of Nineveh, was a pledge in advance that the same gospel—only in its richer, clearer and more blessed fullness—would, in the latter days, be given to all the heathen. By this sacred drama and wonderful history God teaches this truth; by it forecasts his future course for the salvation of a lost world. His design from the beginning, shown in the mission of Jonah, was, in his own time, to give the gospel to all nations.

This loving and merciful purpose has been shown in his procedure ever since that far back day. As the centuries have come and gone, he has, all along, in his own benign way, been executing his eternal purpose of mercy to sinners outside of his church as well as in it. Two hundred and sixty years later, by his purposeful providence, he gave Daniel and others to heathen Babylon, to fearlessly proclaim the truth of heaven in the ears of its kings and idol worshipping people. In the Apostle's day, six hundred and fifty years later still, Foreign Missions began to grow in all directions as never before. The expansion was the Lord's doing. In the Synod at Jerusalem, called to consider important questions growing out of this aggressive work, Peter in his address affirmed "Men and brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did

unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." It was God who did it, he argues.

The audience, now much interested, gives close attention next to Barnabas and Paul, "declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." Then James the just, the eminent man of God, under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, focussed and held the best thought of the council, while he showed that all this success of Peter, Barnabas and Paul, in winning the Gentiles by the gospel, was, undoubtedly, in accordance with God's unchanging and gracious purpose, as declared by himself in Amos 9:11, 12; "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." And for what purpose? He answers: "that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things."

From all this how clear it is, that the nations of the earth are to seek after God and be called by his name. So thought, and so decided, that Spirit-guided Synod in Jerusalem that day.

Then, too, the divine will is shown in the progress of the church ever since. It best grows only when it is widely aggressive. In the wonderful success of Foreign Missions of the present day, our God is speaking aloud his approval of giving the gospel to all the Gentiles. In Jonah's day he gave a foreglimpse of these days. He then gave a masterly lesson concerning his eternal will and purpose for all men. Those who have the gospel are bound to give it to all who are destitute. This beneficent will and purpose was most specifically enjoined by our Lord when, amid circumstances most impressive, in the very crisis period of the world's history, he gave the church her great commission. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The calling and mission of Jonah was one of the early teachings showing the divine will to be that the Gentiles are to be called into the fold of God's people.

In farther proof of this, mark closely the superior, and more than human, way by which our Heavenly Father, back in that early day, prepared the worker for his work. Jonah's flight, his arrest by the storm, his experience with the sailors, their changed views and conduct under his solemn words, his entombment in the fish, his penitence and prayer, his delivery on the land, his second call to the same mission,—all these show how the infinitely wise and wonder-working Jehovah specially prepared him for success in delivering the divine

message committed to him to carry to a people of the peculiar prejudices and training of the Ninevites.

A being of infinite love, patience and power has endless sovereign ways of preparing laborers for the harvest he has for them to gather.

In Jonah's case, we may carefully note that the wonderful way he was dealt with and disciplined brought him from unwillingness and rebellion to true repentance, and to the bold carrying out of the great commission with which he was solemnly charged. That his penitence was genuine we may undoubtedly gather from the narrative. Only a Spirit-changed, Spirit-taught heart could offer prayer like that he breathed up to God from the fish's belly. Nor is it begging the question to hold that, under the circumstances, only a really penitent man would be re-commissioned, by Him who knoweth the heart, to the very work he had before shirked, that is, to go to Nineveh and preach its overthrow.

His later exceeding displeasure at the result is harder to explain, but seems to have been only temporary, and accounted for, in part, perhaps, by his over fatigue; may be, also, by his hunger after his long march, and also by the wilting power of the excessive heat, enfeebling his body and dispiriting his mind. God's tender patience and kindly reasoning with him is surely a sign that he counted the weak man his own child. And Jonah's after faithful penning of the whole account, including his own badness in all its details, without a word of self excuse, is to be taken as proving the same thing, that is: Jonah penitent, and though still a weakling in grace, yet used of God for a special and highly responsible service.

Then, too, as already suggested, the true repentance of the bestormed ship's crew was suited to be a help in preparing Jonah for his work. The marks of a genuine and thorough change in those much exercised seamen were most evident and convincing. When their long experience told them that the tempest which then "lay upon" them was, indeed an unusual one, and when on the top of this, they heard Jonah, with great dignity, reverence and force, declare: "I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land," their views and feelings at once experienced a great revulsion. Sincerely and humbly they now prayed, no longer to their own gods, but to Jehovah the true God. Subduedly they submitted to his will in casting Jonah, the runaway and strangely-behaving passenger, into the sea. Immediately, too, they worshiped the true God,—"offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows," is the record.

We are to understand they offered a sacrifice right then, and promised other acts of worship in the future.

How lasting were these fresh impressions, and long continued the new religious practises of these late converts, we are not told. No word, however, in the whole inspired narrative ever even hints that the great change wrought in them was not real. As far as we are capable at all of judging, they "brought forth fruits meet for for repentance."

Now, this remarkable change in them would give Jonah a lesson. It was calculated to influence him to obey God's call to go at once to Nineveh and preach the preaching that was bidden him. He ought to hope that, upon hearing the same message he had proclaimed to the sailors, the Ninevites would experience the same marked and mighty change.

And the same is true, also, of all the other wonderful experiences of the prophet on the ship and in the sea. One design of all was to help prepare him for his God-given mission; and the trend of the teaching of all was, and is, to add weight to the thought that the leading purpose of the book of Jonah is to foreshadow the call of the Gentiles.

But advancing, note next that this same idea about the regnant design of the book receives additional enforcement from the fact of Jonah's remarkable success in his mission. That success was, indeed, phenomenal. Soon after receiving his unparalleled lessons in preparation he preached to the people of Nineveh, and they at once, and truly, repented. So taught our Lord. He thought worthy to single out from Old Testament history this case as a typical example of genuine repentance. He declares: "The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonas." And he upbraids his hearers for not repenting under the preaching of a greater prophet. Truly the change of heart wrought in the Ninevites was a real one. Their changed conduct, already more fully considered in Chapter XIII, convincingly showed this to be true.

The point to be emphasized here, however, is that the immediate genuine conversion of the people of that hitherto ungodly city was an added corroborative proof that the central teaching of this short but rare book was to give striking hint in advance of God's blessed purpose to call the heathen world into his spiritual fold.

Some interpreters have held that the main design of the book is to teach the nature of true repentance. In support of this view, among other things, they call attention to an ascending grade in the three

examples of repentance given—first, the repentance of Jonah, an individual; second, the repentance of the seamen, a company, and third, the repentance of a nation, the Ninevites, in whom is potently seen a turning from false worship and bad ways to the true worship of the true God,—a change of heart that wrought a change of life. In each of the cases, clearly appears the nature and the blessed results of genuine repentance.

Now, all this, of course, is interesting. Moreover, the truth of it is readily admitted. But at the same time, the prepondering weight of most approved opinion has long been that, while each of these cases undoubtedly holds an important place in this acted prophecy, yet they do not occupy the chief place,—only a secondary one. They are but a part of that higher and wider lesson which it is the lofty purpose of the book to set forth and enforce, to wit: the calling of the Gentiles to be a part of the Lord's people.

But another subordinate yet important purpose of the book bespeaks consideration at this point.

Wrapped up in, or rather, inseparably interwoven with, the main teaching of the book, is clearly the unmistakable lesson of decided rebuke to JEWISH EXCLUSIVENESS. A little thought will make this clear. Israel had an unfounded prejudice against all non-Israel. Despising the Gentiles was their prevailing habit. They considered all heathen as outside of God's covenant. Hence they were accustomed to deem God's mercy as shown to any other nation or people, as just so much a deduction from their own privileges. This proud contempt was often intense. It was always unloving. It was a grudging, narrow-minded, unhallowed feeling. It denied all favor from the God of Israel to the Gentile world. It was the spirit of the elder brother in the parable jealously scolding at all favor shown the repentant prodigal. In his fourth chapter and second verse, Jonah confesses that he was actuated by this spirit. This unhallowed feeling was, undeniably, the source of all his unworthy conduct, as described in the narrative. His disobedience at first, and his displeasure afterwards, sprang from this cause. His effort to divest himself of the prophetic office, rather than obediently use it in proclaiming God's message through him to the Ninevites, is to be traced directly to this harsh and unamiable spirit. This, too, it was that called forth his complaining murmurs and ungenerous anger at the reprieve granted Nineveh on its repentance.

But, guilty himself, Jonah was commissioned to reprove this spirit

so universal among his people. Hence his book sets it forth in unvarnished form. The ugliness and inexcusableness of this spirit, having been forcibly flashed upon him by God's gracious discipline, he hastens, by faithfully using his own personal history, to set it forth clearly, in all its deformity and wrong, as a lesson to his own people and to others. All through his book he exalts the Gentile in comparison with the Jew. The heathen sailors in the storm are contrasted favorably with himself, a prophet of God. So are the penitent Ninevites, with unrepentant Israel. Such, at least, is the implied teaching. Nineveh penitent was a reproof to Israel impenitent. That Jonah may the better teach his people the lesson assigned him, and which it is so important they should learn, he shows a noble forgetfulness of his own reputation, and "is content to pass out of view, at the close of the book, silenced and disgraced."

Clearly evident, therefore, is it that, to reprove the Jews for their narrow-mindedness, and their harsh exclusion of the Gentiles from God's mercy, was one part of the divine purpose in inspiring Jonah to write the book called by his name.

Now, having all these varied teachings before us; and especially taking the central and leading thought of the book to be, as we have seen, the calling of the Gentiles into the church of the true God, we observe vividly how this view lifts the book to a higher plane, gives unity to the whole composition, and, at the same time, adds force and lustre to its several dramatic parts, and its several secondary teachings. This view, too, amply justifies the claim of the book to a place in the canon of the Old Testament prophecy. The unskeptical, reverent mind must ever consider that "the history of Jonah is a part of that great onward movement, which was before the law, and under the law; which gained strength and volume as the fullness of the time drew near; but which could only find its consummation in the incarnation and work of Him in whom all distinctions of country and race were to be forever broken down, in whose name repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among all nations; in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed; who was to be at once a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

In approaching, therefore, our conclusion, recalling to mind all the lofty lessons before us in the preceding discussion, how spontaneously rises the exclamation, what a pregnant book is this brief, but often misunderstood and greatly undervalued prophecy!

We have seen that it is veritable history—every incident and state-

ment it contains being true. We have looked at THE MAN in all the weakness and inexplicableness of his character, have seen him Called, Truant, Bestormed, Overboard, Swallowed, Preserved; have heard him Praying and Quoting Scripture; have viewed him Delivered; have listened to him Preaching; have noted the marked Effects of his mission; have considered Why his short and oft repeated sermon was so Effective; with astonishment have been inclined to turn away from him Displeased; have looked on him in pity as loftily, mercifully, and yet effectually he was Disciplined by Him who at first called him, and patiently, lovingly and wondrously dealt with him all the way through; and then, summing up, we have considered the Main Purpose of it All to be our Beneficent Father's matchless lesson, given in that early day, in that most wondrous way, of his graciously benevolent purpose of sending the gospel to all the Gentile nations of the earth.

We have also noted how the divine Teacher did, in close connection with this chief teaching, also, at the same time, rebuke Jewish Exclusiveness, give striking lesson on true Repentance, show Jonah a Type of Christ in varied marked particulars, and wondrously embrace all these instructions in lofty, swift-moving, and telling dramatic pictures, calculated to blessedly impress the mind and heart.

Surely, yea, most surely, for all THIS, most devout and hearty praise and thanksgiving are ever abundantly due from every soul of man. Blessed is he that readeth, and with new consecration of heart, and new interest in the eternal Father's most marvellous way of unfolding his high and benign plan of redemption, ever earnestly vows these shall be whole-heartedly rendered, and ever keeps paying his vows as the days come and go. Amen.

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